

quite so litigious this year as last, owing, no doubt, to their attention being more or less taken up with the sittings of the Native Land Court, which have taken place at their principal settlements. The Magisterial work at this Court has increased considerably during the past year. No serious crimes have been dealt with.

I have, &c.,

R. S. BUSH,

Resident Magistrate.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

No. 9.

MAJOR SCANNELL, R.M., Taupo, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Taupo, April 14th, 1885.

In compliance with the instructions contained in Circular No. 3 (85-903), dated Wellington, 25th March, 1885, I have the honor to forward, for the information of the Hon. the Native Minister, the accompanying report concerning the Natives in the Taupo District for the past twelve months.

I have, &c.,

D. SCANNELL,

Resident Magistrate.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

REPORT.

The Natives generally have conducted themselves in an orderly and peaceful manner. With the exception of a few cases of assault, no criminal offences have been brought before the Court, nor have any others been reported as having been committed.

A sitting of the Native Land Court was held here in December to determine some succession and subdivision claims. No large blocks were passed through.

An important meeting, as marking a decided change of feeling on the part of the bulk of the Natives of Tokaanu, who have hitherto held aloof from us, was held there in the latter end of February, to decide on offering a piece of land there for sale to the Government as a site for a township. I was present at the meeting, and have already reported the result, and, on the return of some of the leading men who agreed to dispose of the land, the matter is to be put in train for the passing of the block containing the proposed site through the Native Land Court. These men are at present at Tauranga on a visit to the Ngaiterangi by invitation.

In the beginning of this year, a party, consisting of about one hundred men of the Armed Constabulary, was quartered at Tokaanu and Rotoaira, for the purpose of completing the Taupo-Murimotu Road. This road, from Taupo to about five miles south of Tokaanu, a distance of about thirty-five miles, was made for the most part by Native labour, two portions where blasting was required, which work Natives will never undertake, being done by a detachment of the Armed Constabulary; but in April of last year the Natives of Poutu, near Lake Rotoaira, put up a notice on their boundaries, forbidding the making of the road any farther. At the request of Mr Wright, the engineer-in-charge, I had a meeting with these Natives at Poutu, but they would not withdraw their opposition unless they were paid at the rate of two pounds per chain for the land over which the road was carried. As it was not intended to do any more work at that time, winter having set in, and the Natives employed on the road refusing to work till the following spring, the matter was allowed to rest. I informed them that at a suitable time the work would be gone on with, and they, in return, telling me that they would prevent any party from working on their land, and that in the meantime they would apply to the Government for the compensation claimed. When the party of the Armed Constabulary arrived in January last, the Natives thought they had been sent in consequence of the previous stoppage of the works, and withdrew from active opposition. Since then it has been determined to make a dray-road from the most suitable point of departure from the present road to connect with the proposed main trunk railway-line at Waimarino, and the work is now in progress. This road, running along the base of Ruapehu, under the active volcano Ngaruhoe, along the Tongariro chain and the shores of Lake Rotoaira, round Pihanga, and opening out with a full view of Lake Taupo, will offer a series of magnificent views, and will, no doubt, the road being open throughout its whole length, become a favourite route for travellers to the hot springs at Tokaanu, Taupo, and Rotorua.

The Natives generally are anxious to have the roads made, only a comparatively small section holding aloof, among these, I regret to say, the ablest, most enlightened, and by far the most influential chief in the district, Topia Turoa, who, from his personal character, birth, and family connections, is a man of very great influence, not only among the Taupo Natives, but also among the Upper Whanganui, Tuhua, and Waikato Natives.

With regard to the social condition of the Natives, it is difficult to give any decided account, some having partly adopted the social habits of the Europeans, with whom they have been brought into contact, while retaining many of their own customs. Among those who have had less intercourse with Europeans, their primitive habits still prevail, modified, no doubt, by intercourse with their semi-Europeanized fellow-countrymen. The tribe, descended from a common ancestor, or said to be so, is divided into many hapus, or sub-tribes, these again into families, all closely connected, not only by such common ancestry, but by intermarriage.

The hapu—descendants of a son or grandson, or, in very rare cases, a more remote descendant of the common ancestor—is the great family unit among them. They have their separate villages, and their lands are held in common the property of the whole. Members of other hapus may, and very often, have a claim on the communal lands of the hapu, but it is only so from former intermarriages. Each individual family of the hapu can claim some portion as peculiarly its own, but the great bulk of the land outside these claims is common property, to be disposed of only by common consent.

Polygamy prevails to some extent even among Natives who profess Christianity, no restriction being placed by public opinion on the practice. The wives live together, for the most part, contentedly.