

feel great pleasure in being able to renew my statement of last year ; that, on the whole, the general state of the Natives is satisfactory ; in fact, there is a steady improvement ; and as to the up-river Natives, a wonderful step in advance has been made, the barriers of isolation have ceased to exist, and our people are not discouraged from going far up the Wanganui River to the interior of this island. A regular up-river mail service has been established ; this is felt to be a great boon to the Maoris, and thoroughly appreciated.

The Catholic mission stations up the river are doing much good. Great numbers of Natives now visit our town with their produce for sale ; and as they have, to a very large extent, joined the Blue Ribbon movement, they find their visits to us are productive of benefit to themselves ; and are, I think, not without some profit to our business men.

The removal of the Rev. Mr. Grace to Blenheim is much regretted by the very large number of his Maori friends, who looked up to him as a true friend and counsellor. I am glad to find that his successor, the Rev. Mr. Williams, is, in every way, a fitting man to carry on the work so well begun and performed.

The great Native meeting, held by the Hon. the Native Minister at Ranana, in January last, has become a matter of history. I am sure no one could read the account of that meeting, without feeling that the march of progress had made a most rapid stride among the Natives, as well as the colonists. The strong feeling, and unanimous wish that the interior of this island should be opened up by means of railways, roads and bridges, shows that the Natives have at last seen and understand the immense benefits conferred on a country having the advantage of these means of locomotion. I think I may safely say the "Native difficulty" has ceased. I am decidedly of opinion, that under a wise, just and firm government, we need fear no more Maori troubles.

So far as I have observed in my district, the Natives are numerically much the same as last year ; there is, possibly, a slight decrease, but not to a great extent. Taking the Natives in the colony as a whole, I am forced to think they are decreasing in numbers, but not to the extent generally believed.

The benefits of the temperance movement among the Natives are indicated by the facts that the Natives are better behaved, and better fed and clothed ; they are trying to improve themselves, and are seeking to assimilate with their European neighbours.

A Native named Hori Ropiha has been going about the Native settlements telling the people that a member of the English parliament has promised to come out and cause the Native Land Courts to be done away with, and that all confiscated lands shall be returned to them, &c., &c. He (Ropiha) sent some of his emissaries to parts of this district, but the Natives have resolutely set their faces against these doctrines, and will not join in the movement ; Major Kemp, particularly, has taken a strong stand against Ropiha's mischief-making promulgations.

The hearty support being given to our Wanganui River Steam Navigation Company by the Natives must be gratifying and encouraging to all who are taking steps in this direction. From the report furnished by Mr. Rochfort, I understand the Wanganui River can be made available for navigation a good distance into the interior of the island. In this morning's issue of the "Wanganui Chronicle," I read the Hon. Mr. Stout, with Mr. Blair and others "arrived in town yesterday (Sunday) evening, at about half-past eight o'clock, having come overland from Waikato. The party reached the Wanganui River, about 175 miles from Wanganui, on Thursday last, and came down the river in a canoe. The Premier and party expressed themselves much pleased with the appearance of the country, and the facilities offered by the river for opening up the land, Mr. Blair saying the Wanganui people had good reason to be proud of such a fine stream."

The members of the Maori Committee are desirous that they may have power conferred on them enabling them to deal with minor criminal offences. Whether it would be for the best to do so or not seems rather a moot question. While on this subject I may say that I have lately had invitations from some of the leading chiefs to go up the river and hold periodical sittings of my Court.

I have endeavoured to interest the Natives in my district in the forthcoming exhibition to be held in Wellington ; they ought to be able to send a number of exhibits.

I observe in some of the local papers that the Natives have shown some interest in the present Russian difficulty, and the movement of our troops at the Soudan. I am very sure that, should trouble ever come to New Zealand from an outside source, the Maoris would to a man fight bravely under the British flag—and the help of such men as those who defended Orakau is not to be despised. I have been in this Colony forty years, and, during the greater part of this time, I have closely watched the course of events, and rejoice to be able to say that at no time has there been so strong a feeling of loyalty towards the Crown as at present exists ; that this may continue and increase I am sure many will join with me in saying, "so mote it be."

I have, &c.,
ROBERT WARD,
Resident Magistrate.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

No. 15.

W. RENNELL, Esq., Native Officer, New Plymouth, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

New Plymouth, April 13th, 1885.

I have the honor to forward to you a report on the state of the Natives in my district, as directed by your letter of 25th ultimo.

I have, &c.,
W. RENNELL,
Native Officer.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.