

No. 14.

Major HEAPHY, V.C., to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,
Wellington, 26th July, 1870.
I have the honor to forward herewith a Report on the Native Reserves of the Province of Nelson.

The Hon. the Native Minister.

I have, &c.,
CHARLES HEAPHY,
Commissioner of Native Reserves.

Enclosure in No. 14.

REPORT ON THE NATIVE RESERVES OF THE PROVINCE OF NELSON.

By the term of the original deed of purchase of the land lying on the Southern shore of Cook's Strait it was stipulated that "Lands suitable and sufficient for the residence and proper maintenance of the chiefs, their tribes and families, should be reserved by the Governor, Directors, and Shareholders of the New Zealand Company."

In conformity with this agreement a number of Sections in the Town of Nelson, and in the "accommodation" and country lands of the surrounding districts, were chosen as Native Reserves on the general selection of land on the completion of the first surveys. (See Schedules attached.)

These reserves were intended, not merely for the maintenance of the Natives, but as an estate that should conduce to their improvement socially and materially. Owing, however, to its being discovered on the investigation of the New Zealand Company's title, that several of the Motueka Natives had received little or no payment for their lands, a series of the Sections, in all 800 acres, at that place were awarded, in 1844, by Mr Commissioner Spain, to the local natives, thus making payment to them for their land *in reserves which already belonged to their tribe.*

In 1848, an addition was made to the reserves—more especially in Golden Bay—by the addition of such land as the natives were actually cultivating on the outside of the reserves. These have since been conveyed to the local Natives under Crown Grants Act, No. 2.

In 1856, Mr Commissioner McLean allotted four sections at Sandy Bay to the Natives of that place, and in 1862, on the recommendation of Mr. James Mackay, a further apportionment of Sections at Motueka was made to certain Natives who had been overlooked in the original payment, and in the subsequent distribution of reserves.

The Native Reserves at the Motueka and Sandy Bay thus amounted to a total of 1350 acres. But in 1853, Sir George Grey granted out of these the Sections named in the margin* to the Bishop of New Zealand as an Endowment for an Industrial School, and the aggregate area of the reserves in those districts so became reduced to 1000 acres.

On partitioning off the Motueka Reserves by survey, amongst the local Natives it was found that a surplus remained equal to 140 acres, an area which is now let, and yields yearly the sum of £189, which is divided amongst the owners of the adjacent sections.

Of the aggregate of 1000 acres reserved at Motueka and Sandy Bay only about 500 acres are of good land. This gives on the average to each adult Native about six and a half acres of good land, and a similar amount of an inferior quality.

In 1856, at the recommendation of the Chief Land Purchase Commissioner, Mr. McLean, a number of large and valuable reserves were made at West Whanganui, and on the principal rivers falling into the sea between that place and the Northern limit of the province. These have been brought under the operation of the Native Reserves Act, 1856.

The total area of the Native Reserves of the Province is 58,365 acres, 2 roods, 7 perches; the total Native population is 483 souls, giving ostensibly 120 five-sixths acres to each Native. The true proportion is, however, less for the local Natives, as Maoris from both sides of the Straits hold interests in the large—44,000 acre—reserve at West Whanganui.

The whole of these reserves are enumerated according to their classes in the appended Schedules.

NATURE OF THE RESERVES.

The fifty-four town acre reserves at Nelson appear to be of average value with the other town lands. The lands at Motueka and Golden Bay are above the average value of the respective districts, but the shapes of the reserves at the last named place are very irregular, entailing long and expensive lines of fencing. This evil operates, of course, against the settler as well as the native.

The West Whanganui Reserve is chiefly of poor hilly land, but it contains a few small sheltered glens fit for cultivation in the Native manner. It is chiefly valuable however in containing a coal field; which, lying along the shore of the harbor, promises to become of much importance.

At Westport there are forty town sections of one rood each set aside as Native Reserves, seven of which are let, yielding an annual rental of £35. One other town section was let, but has since been abandoned by the tenant owing to the encroachment of the sea. Two Reserves outside the town yield a rent of £20 a year.

The reserves at the Karamea, the Heaphy, the Mokihinui, and the Buller, are chiefly intended for agricultural purposes. For a more detailed account of these Reserves, see memorandum by Mr. Alexander Mackay, appended. I deem it proper to record my opinion of the very satisfactory manner in which the Native Reserves of the Middle Island have been managed by Mr. Alexander Mackay. The difficulties and delays mentioned in respect to the Southland Reserves were beyond his control while the prosperous condition of the West Coast and Nelson estate is due to his careful administration.

* Motueka.—Sections Nos. 219, 220, 241, 242, 159, with parts of 157, 160, 162, 163 and 164.