

member for the Northern Native Districts, came round with Mr. Marsden Clarke, but no works has been undertaken, to the great loss and disappointment of the people, if I except a bridge at Oruru, the contract for which has been taken by a young half-caste, George Marshall, for £375. The Natives have taken a deep interest in the project for improving the district by roads, as it was understood was contemplated by the Government; I have never seen them so earnest before; I trust they will not be disappointed in the ensuing year.

I have, &c.,
W. B. WHITE,
Resident Magistrate.

No. 2.

The RESIDENT MAGISTRATE, Hokianga, to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Hokianga, 27th June, 1872.

In reply to your circular letter of the 2nd instant, desiring me to furnish a general Report on the Natives in this District, I have the honor to state that during the past few years there has been a decided improvement in the whole of the people residing on the Hokianga River and the West Coast adjoining.

As regards intemperance, which at one time threatened the ruin of the whole Native population, and which is still the greatest evil which exists amongst them, it is pleasing to be able to state, from statistical returns, that the quantity of spirituous liquors consumed in this District during the present year is equal to only one-half of the quantity consumed during the same period in 1870, and is less by one-sixth than that consumed during the same period in 1871; and this, too, in the face of a largely increased European population.

There is a rapidly increasing desire amongst the people for the establishment of schools in their midst, for the education of their young men and children in the English language, as they begin to see that without such knowledge they will hold but a poor position in the future of the Colony.

They appear to fairly acknowledge their position as British subjects, having no sympathy with the King movement, and expressing, in no measured terms, their utter abhorrence of the actions of the rebel natives, such as Kereopa and Te Kooti. They obey all summonses and orders of Court, take great interest in the election of members of both General and Provincial Assemblies. Tauas and Native runangas, once so frequent, are fast becoming things of the past, disputes amongst themselves being brought before the Court, and, in all cases, the decisions are accepted as final. Land disputes, which a few years since would have plunged the whole district in war, have been, by the advice of the officers in charge of the District, taken into the Native Lands Court, and have there been settled in a manner thoroughly satisfactory to the various claimants. (I allude more particularly to the disputed cases at Whirinaki and Te Taheke.) It is only a few days since that a large section of the Ihutae, residing at Mungamuka, in the most public manner possible, gave notice that the old Maori law of *tapu* no longer existed in that large District; this, in itself, is an evidence of the great advance these people are making towards civilization.

With regard to the increase or otherwise of the population, I am hardly in a position to speak, having been here only four years, but am inclined to believe that it is decreasing in number; and it is in a great measure to be accounted for by the want of proper attention to the children in infancy, and, for the past few years, to the frequency amongst them of low fever during the winter season, induced, to a considerable extent, by the excessive fatigue and exposure endured by them whilst working on the gum fields.

Agriculture is, I am sorry to say, at a very low ebb, the people growing barely sufficient for their own consumption, and, with the exception of a small quantity of wheat grown at Waima and Te Taheke, no breadstuff is grown in the District. The gum fields, again, may be mentioned as the cause of this, as the people always feel that when short of supplies they have the gum digging to fall back upon as a means of livelihood, but it often leads to their having to endure great privation and suffering, and the money which they so earn is not always spent in the necessities and comforts which they require, but, through the inducements held out to them by unprincipled Europeans, a considerable portion is dissipated in spirits, which, while it impoverishes the people, is at the same time laying the foundation of disease and death. On some of the gum fields not far from this District, I am informed, large quantities of spirits are so disposed of; and it would be a boon to the Native if this great evil could be remedied.

A large section, also, of the population earn their entire living by timber squaring and bush work. Their superiority in this kind of labor enables them to make large sums of money, and they, as a rule, present the appearance of a healthy, well-cared-for people.

With reference to Public Works, roads have been made from Waima to Omanaia, and from thence to Whirinaki, which are of great public utility to both races, and it is further proposed to open up the means of communication by connecting Omanaia with the Township of Hokianga, thus effecting easy land communication between that place and Russell.

To speak of the loyalty of these people seems almost superfluous, when we see around us so many of them who fought and bled in our cause during Heke's war. There are, doubtless, a few turbulent spirits, who would, if they could, cause mischief and trouble, and who are a constant source of anxiety to those whose duty it is to maintain law and order amongst them, but, as a whole, these people may be said to be as loyal to the Government of the country and as desirous to preserve law and order in the District as the Europeans around them. In fact, I may safely say that this populous locality, the most distant from the Seat of Government, will be acknowledged to be as peaceful and orderly a Native District as any in the Colony.

I have, &c.,
SPENCER VON STURMER, R.M.