

No. 3.

The RESIDENT MAGISTRATE, Waimate, to the ASSISTANT UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Office.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office,
Waimate, Bay of Islands, 29th June, 1872.

I have the honor to transmit herewith a Report I have been called upon to make as to the general state of this District, and to request you will be good enough to present the same to the Honorable the Native Minister.

I have, &c.,
EDWD. M. WILLIAMS, R.M.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office,
Waimate, Bay of Islands, 25th June, 1872.

In reply to your circular of the 2nd instant, requesting me to furnish the Government with a General Report of the Natives of this District, I have the honor to offer the following remarks.

In reference to the state of Native feeling generally, I have much pleasure in testifying to that continued loyalty and friendly feeling which, for many years, has characterised the Ngapuhi people; and, in speaking of Ngapuhi, I include those of the Barawa residing on the northern banks of the Hokianga River and on the West Coast as far as Whangape, the northern boundary of the district under my charge.

There exists in the minds of many among this people a desire for improvement, a feeling in favor of law and order—the full establishment of which, however, must necessarily be a work of time. It cannot be expected that the Natives should at once abandon the customs of their forefathers and unanimously adopt those of another race. One party may advocate the change, whilst another party may oppose what they consider an innovation upon their rights and privileges; thus it is, that although an advance has been made, much yet remains to be accomplished and many difficulties to be overcome. There are turbulent spirits amongst them, who, adhering to the ancient law of the land, will at times take the existing law into their own hands, opposing, as much as possible, every effort made for their improvement, and taxing, in no small degree, the patience of those who have official dealings with them; but I believe the majority desire to see this state of things abolished and civilization firmly established. The naturally warlike disposition of the Maori character does sometimes manifest itself in a declaration of open warfare, but great care is observed, even under these circumstances, not to involve either the Government or the settlers in their quarrels. Two instances of this kind have occurred in the District during the present year, both originating in land disputes, and both happily quelled without loss of life, the contending parties agreeing to carry their claims into the Native Land Court, there to be adjudicated upon and settled. Reports of these cases have already been forwarded to the Government. On the whole, I venture to report that the general condition of the District is one of progress—slow, but substantial.

I can testify to an improvement in the moral condition of the Natives, not perhaps, to the extent which may have been anticipated, but yet in advance of their former condition. More respect and decorum is manifested in their general demeanor, more attention paid to the common usages of civilised life; a greater regard shown for the decisions given in the Courts of Justice. Wooden cottages in place of *raupo* are increasing in number in their villages; their lands are inclosed in a more substantial manner, and greater care is bestowed upon their stock. This is attributable partly to the example shewn by the industrious settlers, and partly to the beneficial effect of the Native Land Court, in settling their endless disputes of ownership, individualising property, and securing to them their lands under direct title from the Crown.

The greatest evil prevalent amongst them, and a cause of much regret with their European friends, is the extent to which many of them give way to habits of intoxication. This, however, is not to be considered universal. In some of their villages the introduction of spirits has been entirely prohibited, and cases may be quoted of notorious drunkards having become reformed characters; others also are endeavoring to break off their habits of intemperance, and if the temptation could be kept from them there would be hopes of still further reformation. But these hopes are frustrated, and the energies of their friends paralysed by the efforts which at the present time are being made to inundate the District with spirits. Large quantities of Auckland distilled spirits are being carted into the interior and not only sold wholesale by the Europeans, but distributed over the gum diggings, and there retailed by Maori vendors employed for the purpose. The result is obvious. These spirits being brought to their very doors and sold at a much cheaper rate than the foreign article, the temptation becomes too great for resistance; the Maori falls an easy victim, and the European drives a lucrative trade. But the extent of this evil has yet to manifest itself; with a scarcity of provisions consequent upon the general indifference, and in some instances total failure of their crops, and the winter before them, these Natives in selling their gum for spirits are parting with that which would procure them the food and clothing they so much require. Many I fear will in consequence be driven to extremities, and sickness and death will be the result.

I am able to assert that not only the Resident Magistrates in this district, but also those among the unpaid Justices who are active in the discharge of the duties appertaining to their office, have done their utmost to hinder the illicit trade complained of, but owing to the insuperable reluctance to lay informations or to give evidence unless compelled, they have been able to effect little more than the enforcement of somewhat greater caution in the illegal sale of spirits.

The physical condition of the Natives at the present time is better than it was some six or eight months back, when they were suffering from a low gastric fever then prevalent amongst them, and from the effects of which several deaths occurred, principally among children. Influenza has been general, but not severe. One prevailing cause of sickness is their constant exposure to wet and cold on the