

No. 36.

Mr. S. LOCKE to the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Napier, 4th July, 1872.

I have the honor to forward the following report in reference to Native matters in the East Coast and Taupo Districts.

In this district, comprising as it does the coast line from the southern boundary of Hawke's Bay to the East Cape and the interior of the Island, including the country lying between Taupo and the Waikato settlements, may be seen Natives in every stage of civilization that the Maori has yet attained to, from the Hawke's Bay men, with their well-built and neatly furnished weather-board houses, driving to town in their gig or spider, and employing the latest improved machinery on their farms, and their children being taught the English language, and challenging the European scholars to cricket, and other European sports—to the Maori residing to the north of Taupo Lake, where the ancient custom of *murū* (plunder) in retaliation for all offences is still in force.

East Coast.

Of all the Maoris on the East Coast, those residing in the neighbourhood of Napier and Waipukurau are probably the most assimilated to Europeans in their habits. This may be in part attributed to the fact of their land being of such a description that the whole district was at once turned to account by the settlers either for agricultural or pastoral purposes, without much outlay of capital. For those parts not purchased by Government the Maoris receive high rents, and thus becoming interspersed with the Europeans by whom they were constantly employed either in shearing, road making, or other works, from the several influences thus brought to bear, through the force of example, and from being taught to a certain extent the necessity of obedience to the laws, they have rapidly acquired an outward appearance of civilization in their habits.

Another cause which has tended to develope this state of things, more particularly in Hawke's Bay and Poverty Bay, is that during the past three or four years the Natives have sold and mortgaged large quantities of land to private Europeans, which for a time led them into great extravagance, such as building large houses, buying carriages, &c. For instance, I have seen a respectable old chief drive into town in a carriage, some screws of which had become broken, and as the blacksmith could not repair it before next day, forthwith bought a new one for £90, and drove home, all lamps alight, in broad daylight. The same carriage I shortly afterwards saved from the bailiff's hammer for a debt of £20; and I believe it is at present hidden behind the old man's house lest it should be seized for debt. Many similar instances could be stated showing how the Maori squanders his money. This appearance of prosperity has now collapsed, and the sudden change is felt the more keenly after a long course of uninterrupted dissipation and idleness, which in some instances has left a feeling of discontent and latent desire to repossess themselves of their lost property. Public meetings have been held by the Natives to consider this question, but as Karaitiana Takamoana will probably bring these matters before the Assembly, and I have reported already on this subject on 2nd June, and as Colonel Haultain's return relative to the working of Native Lands Act, with Appendix, Parliamentary Papers, A. No. 2A, 1871, is already published, it is not necessary for me to say more here, excepting with reference to Colonel Haultain's report. It would have been only fair to have given the Europeans a chance of stating their case in reference to the charges brought against them. On the other side, there are men like Karaitiana Takamoana, M.H.R., Renata Kawepo and others, who are zealously endeavouring in every way to improve themselves, and raise their fellow countrymen. They have each large farms, on which the best and latest improved machinery is used. They live in well-built and comfortable furnished houses. Schools have been erected in accordance with the provisions of the Native Schools Acts, 1867–71. These people, with Tareha, possess two good flour-mills, which are kept at work constantly either grinding for themselves or the surrounding European settlers.

Wairoa, Mohaka.

The Maoris of this part of the Province have, since Te Kooti fled from the district, and the Urewera Tribe have wholly come over, settled down to the cultivation of their lands; and the district towards Waikaremoana, and the inland route to Poverty Bay, is fast being taken up as sheep runs.

Poverty Bay, Waiapu.

Poverty Bay is now in many respects similarly situated to Hawke's Bay. The wars and troubles that for years kept this fertile district in constant alarm, and retarded its settlement, have, it is hoped, for ever passed away. It is now progressing rapidly; roads are being made, principally by Native labour, throughout the district, and likewise to connect the scattered settlements along the coast towards the East Cape, Wairoa, Opotiki, and other places. A line of telegraph to Gisborne, by Wairoa, is only required to place this settlement on a footing with any in this Island.

The Natives are anxious that the petroleum springs, of which there are several, should be tested and turned to account. The same question respecting the alienation of lands that has arisen in Hawke's Bay has been raised here, and to which I referred in my last report on this district last year.

One matter of complaint is the number of owners, apparently with equal rights, in the grants awarded by the Poverty Bay Commission, and no means provided for ascertaining their relative claims or for subdividing the blocks. In reference to those lands that pass the Native Lands Court, clause 14 of "The Native Lands Act, 1869," with power to subdivide after the land had been dealt with by some of the grantees, if complied with, might to some extent remove the inconvenience complained of.

Taupo.

The good feeling that has been established during the last two years in this district still continues. Public works are being carried on in different directions. The first work for the development of an inaccessible country, as this was two years back, was to open communication for dray traffic with the