

A great change is now coming over the Natives as they gradually assimilate to our manners and customs; and, owing to their highly imitative natures, it will not be long before they become civilized and amenable to law: the rising generation in particular showing every disposition to cast off the customs of their forefathers, and go in for a thorough imitation of the habits, customs, and amusements of the European races. As a consequence their necessities are increasing, and they find they cannot do without a certain quantity of the circulating medium, so as to keep up appearances and gratify their newly-acquired tastes. This will eventually force them to make more use of their superabundant land, a careful, judicious, and wise administration of which should make them all independent and easy in their circumstances—in fact, rich men.

By way of further remark upon the state of Native feeling, I would mention the fact of an existing apprehension in the Maori mind of possible future discord and strife between the races; and the remark has been made that, should another outbreak take place, the friendly Natives would decline to assist in quelling such disturbance, and would remain neutral spectators of the struggle. The bare fact of such a determination being come to is ominous of future troubles, which, however, may possibly be averted. Such intention has been communicated to the Waikatos, who are not unlikely to prove less conciliatory in consequence.

As to the moral and physical condition of the Natives, I cannot speak so favourably as I could wish. In morality the Maori does not come up to our standard, the customs of the race, which are of a low order, being still practised amongst them, and there cannot be much improvement till the communistic habits of the people are given up. Religion is at a low ebb, and they are now entirely without the influence and teaching of any minister, European or Native. A serious responsibility lies at the door of the Church Missionary Society, owing to the vacancy caused by the death of the late Rev. B. K. Taylor not having been filled up. A missionary field of great extent and importance now lies unoccupied, and a scene of much usefulness, amongst a highly interesting people, has been for nearly twelve months entirely neglected. The sacred services held by the school teacher at Iruharama on Sundays, at which both parents and children attend, are the only regular and properly-conducted religious meetings on the river, with its population of over 2,000 souls, and a good effect is produced thereby.

Neither the moral nor the physical development of the Natives is improved or raised by their drinking habits, there being a greater consumption than ever of the fire or stinking-water (*waipiro*) by the Maoris of these districts. No meeting takes place and no work of importance is undertaken without a good supply of grog being obtained for the jollification of the attendants; and at the carpenter's bench and in the harvest fields the black bottle, with its burning and inebriating contents, is too frequently seen and used. Good Templarism has not yet been started here, but there are those of the race, men of influence and standing, who would give it their support if introduced on this river.

There has been no serious epidemic during the past year, although a good deal of sickness exists at times. Mr. Donaldson has been most useful as a doctor and dispenser of medicines at Iruharama, and the Natives from all parts of the river flock to him for advice and medical treatment. They highly appreciate his services, and have asked that he should be remunerated, as he has been the means of saving many lives and curing a host of patients. It is of great consequence to the Natives the furnishing of medicines to the school teachers for supply to them at their distant kaingas; and much kindness and regard has been shown to them by the Government in the hitherto liberal response made to their requirements in this matter. They are practically shut out of the Wanganui Hospital, an institution originally endowed and set apart for their special benefit, and hence the keeping up of a medical department in the interior is a question of vital importance to the race. Those of them that can afford it frequently employ a doctor at their own expense, and but few care for the services of the Native medical officer of the district.

In the matter of agriculture and industrial pursuits, the usual crops of wheat, oats, maize, potatoes, &c., have been raised, but the markets have not been good, except latterly for wheat, a limited quantity of which the Maoris are holding back for grinding by their mills into flour, for home consumption and sale. Two iron flour mills, constructed of the best machinery, are now completed and in working order, at Koriniti and Karatia, having cost the Natives about £400 each. In a short time two more of such mills will be put up at Pipiriki and Ohura, the former place seventy and the latter 150 miles up the Wanganui River. A compact hand flour mill was supplied this year to the chief Marino, at his request, by the direction of the late Native Minister, Marino's kainga being some 200 miles distant by the river, and on a branch stream called Ongarue which takes its rise in the picturesque mountain of Hikurangi near the Tuhua Ranges, in the far interior of this island. As indicated in my last annual report, the Wanganui Natives have procured a number of sheep and distributed them at the principal settlements in flocks of two and four hundred. Over 3,000 have been so allocated; the chief Renata Kawepo, of Napier, having largely contributed to the number by presenting Mete Kingi with a flock of 2,000 from his station in the Patea country. Sheep-tending has become quite a mania, and the Natives are very busy clearing and sowing their lands with grass in the neighbourhood of the river settlements. An edict has also gone forth to destroy the many useless Maori curs infesting all the pas, and the cattle and swine have been removed to separate preserves, so that the woolly flocks may have every chance of increasing and adding another