

very many deaths have occurred. Whooping-cough, which made its appearance in this district in September last, has carried off a considerable number of very young children; many also have succumbed to low fever, and the diseases of the chest which are so common amongst them. Of those who have passed away, I may mention the names of Wame and Rapana te Waha, Ngapuhi chiefs, and Tia Pakeke, a chief of Te Rarawa. These men were all far past middle age, and had made a name for themselves amongst their people. Crime does not appear to be so prevalent as formerly, which perhaps may be owing to the fact that there is now a resident member of the Armed Constabulary in the district, of whom the few unruly characters seem to have a wholesome dread.

The moral and social habits of the Maoris seem unchanged, though I have reason to believe there has been less drunkenness and gambling than formerly, and naturally less crime.

The crops during the past season have been very good; and at Whirinaki, where, through the instrumentality of Captain Mitchell, the village schoolmaster, a few acres were sown in wheat as an experiment, an excellent crop has been raised, and the Natives are now preparing a large area of ground to be sown with this valuable grain.

The Native schools, of which there are now seven in the district in full working order, are doing well, and are receiving a large share of support from the people. They have an attendance of upwards of 260 pupils, and a very large number of the young people can converse in the English language in an intelligent manner, and all can read, write, and cipher as well as the majority of European children of the same ages. I have, however, forwarded, for the information of the Hon. the Native Minister, a separate report on the Native schools in this district on the 14th January last.

A few of the Natives have been employed road-making by the County Council, but the greater number of the people are engaged in the forests preparing timber for the colonial and southern markets.

Kauri-gum-digging has not been so extensively followed as formerly, as in many places the supply is exhausted. This, I think, is an advantage to the Natives, as it will cause them to lead a more regular life, and to attend more to their cultivations and homes, and give them less opportunity for drunkenness and its consequent evils.

In September last a dispute was occasioned between the Ngatiue and Ngaitu, residing at Punaakitere and Otatau respectively, regarding the right to some eel-fisheries, and the boundaries of land, which at one time threatened to be of a serious nature, but was eventually, at the suggestion of some of the chiefs, settled by arbitration; Marsden Clarke, Esq., E. M. Williams, Esq., R.M., Waimate, myself, and several Native chiefs, acting as arbitrators.

I have, &c.,

The Under Secretary, Native Department,
Wellington.

SPENCER VON STÜRMER,
Resident Magistrate.

No. 4.

Mr. E. M. WILLIAMS, R.M., Bay of Islands, to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,— Resident Magistrate's Office, Waimate, 16th May, 1878.

In reply to your circular of the 25th of April last, calling for my annual report on the state of the Natives of this district, I have the honor to offer the following remarks:—

Since the date of my last report, little change has taken place in the conduct or condition of the Natives of this district. They continue to employ themselves as usual on their cultivations; in kauri-gum-digging; felling, squaring, and drawing timber from the forests; whilst others who possess drays and bullock-teams meet with steady employment from the settlers, in carting their produce to and from the interior.

The whale fishery has become an established industry amongst the Natives residing on the coast, who have expended large sums of money in the purchase and fitting out of boats. During the last season three different parties were formed, commanding amongst them fifteen boats, and, the success attending their efforts having encouraged a further outlay, it is expected that during the coming season their operations will be greatly extended, and employment found for a large number of men, many of whom have become experienced whalers. The Natives are generally acknowledged to be good oarsmen, managing their boats with skill, and the large number of whales passing along the coast at certain seasons of the year give every encouragement of continued success. It is worthy of remark that some of these boats are built by Natives, two of whom, residing at Whangaroa, have proved themselves excellent mechanics. Three or four boats built by them have given so much satisfaction that orders have been received for three or four more. These boats will bear comparison with those of European build.

No particular change has taken place in the condition of the Natives since I last reported. Some are aiming to improve their position by adopting European habits and customs; but the greater number appear content to live on as formerly, indifferent to the comforts of civilization, being too far inured to their old habits of life to be induced to abandon them entirely; and in the rising generation must be sought that change which, under a system of training and tuition, may lead them to adopt those habits of civilized life which to the majority of the present race appear so distasteful.