

No. 10.

Mr. R. S. BUSH to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER, Wellington.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Raglan, 25th May, 1878.

In reply to your circular of 25th ultimo, I have the honor to transmit the usual annual report on Native matters in this district.

Condition of Natives.

During the past year I have visited the different tribes resident in the district as heretofore. There has been no infectious disease amongst them during the past year, until the last month or so, since which time the hooping-cough has been prevalent throughout the district, both amongst the Europeans and Natives: nevertheless the deaths since my last report have nearly doubled the births, and I am of opinion that during the past five years the deaths in this district have averaged in the proportion of ten to eight births, which proves that the Maori is slowly decreasing in numbers.

The census which I have just completed shows a total of 1,321. Out of these, there are 448 males over the age of fifteen, and 424 females over the age of fifteen, and 259 males and 190 females under the age of fifteen years.

Of this number, about 820 are Kingites and 501 friendlies. Their moral condition, such as it is, will bear comparison with that of other districts. I only do them justice when I say that they are the most sober and best-conducted tribes I have been amongst. In support of this, I would here state that only two Natives have been convicted for petty thefts during the last five years; and on the average one Native is fined for disorderly conduct and drunkenness every year. Drunkenness as it was seems a thing of the past, except amongst that class of Natives who make it a practice to hang about our settlements.

Although some 3,000 Natives were present at the late Hikurangi meeting, not a single case of drunkenness occurred, spirits being forbidden by order of Tawhiao. The order was so strictly enforced that one European present who transgressed it had a bottle of brandy taken away by the Native police, as soon as they learned he had one in his possession. A day or two previous to the arrival of the Premier and Native Minister at Alexandra, Te Kooti reached Hikurangi with a following of about fifty. The police ascertained he had spirits with him; he was consequently ordered away from the place of meeting, and returned to Te Kuiti.

A few years ago no notice would have been taken of the advent of spirituous liquors amongst them: in fact the Natives themselves used to manufacture a kind of spirit from maize and sugar, which was largely consumed at their *huis*.

Their new Tariao religion is not adhered to with the same warmth that it was a year or two ago. The services seldom take place now oftener than night and morning.

Disposition.

Every year seems to bring about a better feeling amongst the Kingite section of the Native race, who are apparently becoming tired of the seclusion which they have entailed on themselves for several years past; they now long for a return to the former state of affairs. Men even of the Maneha and Kiwi stamp are anxious for me to visit them at their settlement at Te Taharoa, South Kawhia, and have given me repeated invitations to go there pheasant-shooting. I have not, up to the present, availed myself of their invitations.

The late meeting at Hikurangi will do much to improve the good feeling so much desired by all the right-thinking chiefs, and must eventually prove of great assistance to Tawhiao in checking those of his subjects who are at times turbulently inclined. During my experience amongst the Natives, I have never seen so large a gathering where more good feeling was displayed than I have on this occasion, or the same good order maintained.

It will be needless for me to narrate what passed at the meeting, as I presume that will be fully and officially reported upon by the honorable the Ministers who were present: suffice it if I say that, from the reception to the termination, the Natives appeared anxious to be thought well of, and to show their desire for a speedy settlement of the present unsatisfactory state of affairs.

The Tekau-ma-rua, who have not adopted the Tariao form of religion, adhere to Te Whiti and Tohu, the Taranaki prophets. These allege that there will have to be a meeting at Waitara, the place where blood was first spilt. They base their ideas on the first verses of the 27th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew. According to the Tekau-ma-rua, this meeting must take place before the final settlement can be made. Te Aroha, of the Akitai, is the head of the Tekau-ma-rua amongst the Waikato King party. These people make periodical visits to Te Whiti.

The breach between the Maniapoto and Waikato King party apparently widens every year. I notice a growing desire, amongst the different sections of the Natives residing in this district, to procure warlike stores, which, for want of a better reason, I attribute mainly to the above split; and I think I am not far wrong, when it is remembered that, as this breach has widened, the anxiety of Tawhiao and his Waikato Kingite followers has increased in the same ratio to unite all the Waikato tribes as one people. I am inclined to think against a tribal enemy Waikato would be united. The Ngatimaniapoto have for some years past been endeavouring to get rid of the Waikatos from their territory, and have partly succeeded in removing them to