

The Natives generally are still industrious. Agriculturists have grown more maize than usual this year, besides wheat, and have also continued to supply labour to the European farmers.

But few of the Natives in this district are now nominal Christians, the large majority of them having given in their adherence to the superstition called "Te Kooti's karakia."

They show but little interest in educational matters: the school which existed at Whareroa had to be given up on account of non-attendance of scholars, and the buildings have been utilized as a boarding-house for sons of Native chiefs attending the Tauranga District School. I have already six in this institution, which number is to be increased to twelve or more, as suitable youths present themselves.

II. *Maketu District.*

My remarks as to the physical condition of Natives in the Tauranga District apply also to this. The census returns show a decrease from 2,955 to 2,219; but this large difference is caused by over 600 Natives having been, in the census of 1874, included in the Maketu District, who more properly belonged to Opotiki. Taking this into consideration, though there is a diminution in numbers, it is not a very large one.

I believe that the absence of a medical man in this district causes the mortality to be greater than it should be, and I may remark that one is much needed in the Lake country, both by Natives and Europeans, although Captain Mair has, with his customary kindness, assisted the Natives with medicines and comforts in sickness.

The moral condition of the Natives appears to me improving about Maketu, but at Ohinemutu, and the parts visited by tourists, drunkenness and debauchery are far too common.

This is to be attributed, in a great measure, to the absence of European police, and I am glad to say that my representations on this subject have resulted in a promise that one or more constables shall be stationed there when a police-station has been built.

The all-absorbing topic of interest amongst the Natives during the past year has been the land question, and the Land Court now sitting at Maketu. If it were only from the consideration of the time spent by the Natives in discussing these land questions, it must be evident that they will really be better off when some of these lands have passed into the hands of Europeans who will work them.

I have visited Ohinemutu and Maketu, especially the former, frequently during the last year, to hold Courts, &c., assisted occasionally by Captain Preece, though, from the little work I have had as Commissioner of Lands, I have not had to call on that gentleman frequently. The inland Natives are very litigious, and generally keep a Magistrate sitting from two to three days at the monthly Court held at Ohinemutu.

Several of the Native Assessors attend this Court regularly, and are of great assistance to the sitting Magistrate. There has been no difficulty, with their assistance, in carrying into effect the judgments of the Court. I am glad to remark a general desire on the part of the Natives to repair their old flour-mills, and to grow wheat as a crop again. The Government assistance given and promised to repair these mills appears a real boon to them. Five Native schools are in operation in this district, with a marked degree of success in one case, and with a moderate degree in others.

III. *Opotiki District.*

This district I have visited once during the past year. I remark that the Natives in one part of it are not decreasing so fast as they are in other parts. One tribe, the Whakatohea, I believe to be even increasing in numbers. The Natives in this district, especially the Whakatohea, Whanau a te Hutu, and Whanau a Maru, continue to be conspicuous for their industry as agriculturists. They appear to be turning their attention to the leasing of their lands, and are bringing a number of claims before the Land Court.

The Urewera Tribe, who some years since were so troublesome, appear now to be as amenable to the wishes of the Government as others.

There are five Native schools in this district, some of which have been very successful, and a considerable number of Maori children attend the district school at Opotiki. The system of sending Native children to our common schools should, in my opinion, receive every encouragement from the Government.

Referring generally to the Bay of Plenty, Sir, the Natives will be found to be in such a state of order and advancement as leaves but little to report on. Any disputes which have occurred during the past year have been about land titles. When these occur they still talk of appealing to arms, but in every other respect they are as amenable to the law when administered with discretion as could be hoped for.

I have, &c.,

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Native Officer, Bay of Plenty.