

No. 12.

Captain PREECE, R.M., Opotiki, to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Opotiki, 6th June, 1878.

In compliance with instructions contained in your Circular No. 11, of the 25th April, I have the honor to forward the following report of the Natives in this district for the information of the Hon. the Native Minister.

Industrial Pursuits.

The Natives in this district, especially those at Opotiki, Omaio, Te Kaha, and Raukokore, continue to be industrious and well-behaved. Seven thousand two hundred bushels of wheat and twelve thousand eight hundred and eighty-four bushels of maize were grown this year at Te Kaha, Omaio, and Raukokore, besides large quantities at other places. The Te Kaha Natives have repaired their old flour-mill at Maraetai, at a cost of £120; it is now in full working order. The Whakatane Natives have collected money for a flour-mill, but up to the present time they have taken no active steps towards having it erected, owing to the jealousy existing between the two tribes: each party want to have a mill of their own, and, as they have not sufficient funds to erect two mills, the matter stands in abeyance. I have tried several times to persuade them to put their funds together for the purpose of having one mill.

The Natives at Rangitaike have commenced to grow wheat, but only sowed a small quantity last year; they intend to plant on a large scale this year. These Natives have also taken to sheep-farming; they brought 400 sheep from Napier last year, and intend to get 600 more this year.

Te Waru and his tribe of ex-rebels continue to cultivate on the land at Waiotahi which was given to them by the Government. They had about fifty acres under crop last year. They have applied to the Waste Land Board to have a piece of land put up for sale, which they are anxious to purchase. Several other Natives of this district have applied to purchase Crown land.

Native Schools.

There are six Native schools in this district—viz., at Te Kaha, Omaio, Torere, Omaramutu, Whakatane, and Fort Galatea. The attendance at the two first has continued to be good. The Torere School has only lately been opened; the attendance has been good up to the present. The attendance at Whakatane and Omaramutu has not been good; and the school at Fort Galatea has been virtually closed since the beginning of January last, owing to the master being away from his post on sick leave. The average attendance of Native children at the Opotiki District School during the last two quarters has been twenty-seven. I think that the system of educating Native children at the district schools is likely to be far more satisfactory in its results than that of the Native schools established in the immediate vicinity of their own settlements.

Condition, Moral and Social.

With regard to the Opotiki Natives, I am happy to state that they conduct themselves very well; there is very little drunkenness amongst them, and their moral condition generally will compare favourably with the Natives of other districts. The Urewera drink more than the other tribes; they take quantities of spirits to their own settlements, where they drink to excess at their "huis" or meetings, which take place frequently: they have generally behaved well in the township. The general health of the Natives has been good; there has been no epidemic amongst them this year. Only two Natives of note have died during the present year—viz., Tamatemaerangi, an old chief and Government pensioner, at Te Kaha, and Peraniko Parakiri, chief of the Ngatimanawa, at Fort Galatea. The loss of the last-mentioned chief will be felt very much in that part of the district, as he was a well-behaved and loyal man.

There have been a number of cases before the Resident Magistrate's Court in which Natives have been concerned—viz., civil cases between Natives, 11; Natives against Europeans, 7; Europeans against Natives, 27. The latter were principally overdue accounts to storekeepers.

The number of criminal cases was 30, and against 26 defendants and prisoners, for the following offences—viz.: Larceny—committed for trial, 1; summarily convicted, 3; dismissed on merits, 3; breach of Municipal Police Act—convicted, 11; dismissed, 1; drunkenness, 10; under Vagrant Act, 1; assaults, 7; other cases, 3. In some of the above cases Natives were prosecutors.

The Urewera Tribe are gradually becoming more amenable to the law; several cases from their part of the district have been adjudicated on during the present year, in some of which both parties belonged to the said tribe.

Census.

A Native census has been taken, which shows the population of the district to be 2,775. The census of 1874 was 2,711. Although the number is more than shown in 1874, there is really a decrease, as two hapus, which I have included in my return, were in the Maketu District census of that year.

In conclusion, I beg to state that a thoroughly good feeling exists between the Maoris and Europeans. Some of the Natives of the Whakatohea Tribe cultivate lands in the district which