

as well as a pastoral district, and more wheat than necessary for home consumption can easily be raised. When the interior is thrown open the farmers will be more certain of their crop, as, owing to the shelter there afforded from the coast winds, all kinds of cereals will be raised in abundance and periodical certainty.

Nothing further has been done in the matter of sericulture or hop-growing. They have abundance of hop-plants and mulberry-trees, but the Natives lack the knowledge and experience necessary to make these important industries a success where all other circumstances are so favourable for their development. The Natives seem more disposed to go in for the raising of stock, and almost every settlement now has its flock of sheep, besides horses and cattle; and much ground has been cleared, and grass sown thereon, on both sides of the river for pasture grounds for said animals. Soon it will be the happy lot of the traveller to be treated by the Maoris, renowned for hospitality, with a kid from the fold, or a lamb from the flock, with butter, honey, &c., wherewith to regale his appetite and satisfy the cravings of hunger under the shade and shelter of some wide-spreading palm-tree, on the luxuriant banks of the Wanganui. Such trees will then become useful as well as ornamental, and I have asked the Maori wood-cutter on many occasions "to spare the tree" (the New Zealand palm) for above-named reasons. Several bales of wool, the produce of the up-river Maori flocks, were disposed of in Wanganui at last clip at satisfactory prices, and in all probability the Natives here, as elsewhere, will soon become extensive flock-owners; and as the leases of some of their runs expire, they will be prepared to stock them themselves, and partake of all the profits arising from this paying branch of industry. Such idea has already occupied their minds, and will soon be acted upon.

No public works have been undertaken this year; but an appeal has lately been made by the Tuhua Natives to the Government for assistance in making a road in the interior, to connect the Upper Wanganui lands (where several blocks have only recently been acquired) with the Tongariro and Morimotu Plains, whereby an outlet would be made from vast tracks of unexplored territory to the more open and available country. To my mind, such an undertaking is well worthy of consideration, as it would help towards throwing open the interior for settlement, and further the continued progress of the colony. The said road would tap one of the most isolated and distant of localities situated on the widest and most central part of the Island, hitherto an interdicted country, and containing millions of acres of rich forest lands, level and hilly, and no doubt rich in mineral wealth.

As to other matters likely to prove of interest to the colony, I might mention the recent enumeration of the Maori population in my district, the Wanganui River from Kaiwhaiki (twelve miles from town) to the source. As shown by the census returns, a Native population occupies the various settlements on the banks of the river, of some two thousand souls. The disparity between the sexes is not so great, but there are considerably more adults than children, and, of necessity, during the next decade of years or so there will be a great falling off in the number.

Owing to the system of registry now adopted the late census will be more accurate and reliable than any previous one; but, notwithstanding, I venture to predict that a decrease will be found in the grand total of the Maori population (taken in March last), as compared with the census of 1874.

Owing to the intemperate and dissolute habits of the parents many of their children die in infancy from negligence and hereditary disease. Everything has been done by a paternal Government to relieve the wants and necessities of the sick by the services of Native medical officers in town, and the gratuitous dispensation of medicines through the Native teacher at Iruharama, the most populous pa on the river. The Natives highly appreciate this attention to their wants, more particularly the supply of medicines, and are continually coming to the teacher for medical advice and prescriptions. Mr. Nickless is indeed performing a good work at Jerusalem, in doing all he can to educate the Maori youth, and benefit their parents by all means in his power. His services have lately received that appreciation they fully deserved, by the Government, in the shape of an increase of pay. In the absence of a missionary his presence amongst the Maoris helps to prevent their entirely forgetting the duties of religion. The school-room is almost the only place on the river now where regular worship is kept up on the Sabbath, and only recently his Lordship the Bishop of Wellington held his services there to crowded congregations, and, in his able and eloquent style, rivetted the attention of his audience, whilst he reasoned with them "of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come."

During the past year fewer cases have come before the Court for adjudication than usual, partly owing to the diminution of quarrels and misunderstandings amongst the Maoris, and partly to the preference given to the Native committee, which accounts for its proceedings to the tribe, including the appropriation of the fees and fines, in which the litigants are often heavily mulcted. I have had only one really serious criminal case to deal with lately, and that was one where, over a land dispute, one of the parties cut down the other with a bill-hook, inflicting a severe incised wound on the arm. The aggressor gave himself up to justice, through the intervention of the Native Assessor, Hakaraia, and was committed by me for trial at the Supreme Court, where the Grand Jury took a merciful and lenient view of the case, and threw out the bill.

As already stated, the public peace is always more or less liable to be disturbed over these land quarrels; and now, as there are so many surveys going on, it would be well in all disputed