

to which they are constantly adding, by fresh purchases from Wanganui and neighbourhood. A good deal of wool has been sent to town from Ranana and the other river settlements, and disposed of, for the most part in the grease, at market prices. Woolsheds, pens, and sheep-washes are being constructed, and European labour employed.

I am not aware that any inspection has been made of the up-river flocks, and I am constantly urging upon the Natives the necessity of their having an early inspection, by a Sheep Inspector, of all their sheep, with a view of their obtaining clean certificates, and taking steps, if necessary, to have their sheep washed, so as to prevent the breaking out of scab, which would be a serious matter to them and adjoining European flockowners—on the principle of prevention being “better than cure.” The sooner this is done the better, and, considering the importance of the business, I would recommend the Sheep Inspector here being instructed to make an early visit to the up-river settlements, to enforce the tax, and report upon the state of the Maori flocks; there being one (varying in number from 400 to 2,000 sheep) at each of the seven main settlements from town to Utapu, a distance of 90 miles.

In the matter of public works, the Murimotu Road has at last been commenced, and Mr. Field’s line adopted. The Natives are unanimous in giving the preference to this line, and have subscribed a sum of £36 10s. towards its cost, to be followed by further subscriptions, and assistance in labour, if required. The money, by the advice of the Hon. the Native Minister, was paid to the Treasurer of the County Council, and the Chairman acknowledged the receipt thereof in complimentary and grateful terms. Too great importance cannot be placed on this undertaking, as the road in question will unlock the vast interior, from whence the natural outlet will be the Wanganui Harbour. On the success of these two important works—the main road to Murimotu, Taupo, and Tuhua Districts, and the deepening and improvement of river and harbour—depend the rapid advancement and future importance of Wanganui.

The material used in the harbour works is being quarried out of Maori lands on the bank of the river, some twelve miles from the port. There seems to be an inexhaustible supply of good stone at the works, and the operations there carried on attract the wondrous gaze of the Maoris paddling up and down the river; leading to the frequent exclamation, “Te mahi a te pakeha!” (the wonderful work of the white man!) As already stated, works of this kind greatly strike the Maori mind, and give him a most exalted idea of our knowledge, skill, and power as a nation.

In matters of colonial interest, I might mention the continued absence of the population from the lower-river pas and higher up, numbering some 150 souls, at Parihaka. A few of them keep going to and fro; but the larger portion remain at Parihaka, awaiting the fulfilment of the prophecies of Te Whiti. Notwithstanding the non-realization of his many prognostications, they still seem to believe in him, and accept his teachings as inspired, and certain of accomplishment. However, one would think that the patience of his adherents will soon be exhausted, and that even his staunchest supporters will, before long, lose all faith in him, and turn round upon him and persecute him to the death! Notwithstanding a few ugly rumours to the contrary, the universal saying is that Te Whiti discountenances all resort to “carnal weapons,” and that there is to be no more fighting. Judging from recent events, and the result of the firm but conciliatory policy of the Government towards these people, we may look hopefully to the future, and expect that ere long the West Coast Maori difficulty will be a thing of the past.

The Maori schools, I regret to say, continue closed, and there seems no immediate likelihood of their being reopened. The attempt made by Father Pertius to start a Church boarding-school at Iruharama, in the village schoolhouse, proved a complete failure, and the work had to be abandoned, and the missionary removed to the Middle Island. One of the Native boys from this school is seeking after further instruction in the State school at Greytown, and another has entered a lawyer’s office in this town; so that the village school system at Wanganui has been attended with this small, though satisfactory, result.

It is not that the Wanganui Natives cannot see the value of education, but the failure of the schools is owing, in a great measure, to the want of authority of the parents over their children, and the distracting and unsettling influence of the late land-selling movement over the whole river population, causing them to move about from locality to locality in a state of feverish excitement, to watch their interests in the soil.

I would here mention the fact that a college for Maori girls, endowed by Henry Churton, Esq., situate at Aramoho, a few miles from town, will be opened next month, and it is to be hoped it will prove a success.

Of the moneys invested by the land sellers last year, over £3,000 still remains in the New Zealand Bank at interest, but at reduced rates. I am not sanguine that said money will be left much longer at the bank, as over £1,000 has been withdrawn and spent; and I am afraid that ere long the balance will vanish in like manner. The Maoris are an improvident race, and it will take time to teach them habits of economy and thrift. In fact, they have hitherto obtained money so easily that they have yet to learn its value.

Owing to the trouble and expense of curing, the cultivation of hops and tobacco has been given up, and the vines have been allowed to run wild.

Silkworms have been supplied to the Tuhua Natives, who have an extensive mulberry plantation, and next season, in all probability, a good few cocoons will be brought to town for sale. If the producers meet with a ready and profitable market for the same in Wanganui, they will be encouraged to persevere in the industry of sericulture; otherwise they will abandon the enterprise.

I believe, some day, all these important industries will be pursued with profit up the Wanganui River; than which locality no finer field could be found for fostering and developing these important branches of agriculture.

With reference to the reductions lately made in the Native expenditure, by the dismissal of some of the assessors and police, and the cutting-down of the salaries of others, the payees, as a whole, have made no outcry, and have submitted to the inevitable with a good grace, seeing that the circumstances of the colony demand strict economy in Native and all other expenditure. The reductions were made in such manner as to give no offence to the sufferers, each of whom was written to from the Native Office and duly informed of the reason for the reductions made.