

The crops in some parts of the district have suffered much from the dryness of the season.

The health of the district has been remarkably good during the past year.

Crime amongst the Natives in this district, I am happy to say, appears to be on the decrease, but three convictions against Natives have been recorded during the past year—one for petty larceny, one for drunkenness, and one for arson, by a lunatic, who burned down the gaol wherein he was locked up.

I have, &c.,

GEO. KELLY,

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

Interpreter.

No. 3.

Mr. VON STÜRMER, R.M., Hokianga, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Hokianga, 12th May, 1881.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular letter No. 15, of 23rd April, 1881, requesting me to forward my annual report on the state of the Native population in this district, for the information of the Hon. the Native Minister.

During the past twelve months very little change of any importance has taken place in the feelings and condition of the Native population in this extensive and populous district, for, while I am able to state that they have not gone back in any way, I am unable to say that they have made much progress.

The health of the people has been, on the whole, remarkably good, and the number of births has been slightly in excess of deaths; the only man of note who has died being the old chief Rangatira Moetara, a Ngapuhi of high rank, belonging to Waimamaku.

Drunkenness, though still a serious evil amongst them, is not, I am glad to say, so prevalent as formerly; and this is not owing to a want of means, as large sums of money have lately passed through their hands, but to the fact that they spend more of their earnings in the necessaries and comforts of life, in preference to squandering them in drink. As a proof of this I may say that a bare-footed Native is hardly ever seen, and garments of native manufacture are not now made in the district.

The supplies of food for the coming winter are very large, and the crops of kumaras, potatoes, and maize have been heavy, the quantity stored being far in excess of former years. At Waima a larger area has been under cultivation this season than has been known for the last twenty years. Several teams and ploughs have been engaged in the work, instead of depending, as formerly, so much on hand labour.

During the past six months upwards of one hundred of the young men belonging to Whirinaki, Waima, Taheke, Omanaia, and Motukaraka have been employed road-making for the County Council and the Public Works Department, and large numbers from other settlements have been engaged at ordinary bush work and kauri-gum-digging.

Since my last report no offences of a serious character have been committed by the Natives, and, though a considerable number of cases have been brought before the Court, they have been of a trifling nature only, and I consider that on the whole they have conducted themselves in a most law-abiding and satisfactory manner, in fact quite as well as the same number of Europeans would have done.

Their loyalty to the Crown is, I am convinced, unaltered, and, though at the late meeting held at Waitangi in March last they may have expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with the action of the Government, and with certain laws which to them appear oppressive, their readiness to obey the law even when they consider it bears rather heavily upon them is a most convincing proof that they have no desire to act other than as British subjects. I feel sure nothing could be further from their wishes than a return to their old Native laws and customs. Of course there may be a few turbulent characters amongst them, who would be glad to cause trouble, but they are in the minority, and are kept well in hand by the better-disposed. The promptitude with which they pay the judgments in the Resident Magistrate's Court is, considering their circumstances, remarkable, and, when we take into consideration the fact that they have so lately emerged from barbarism, it is really surprising to see how readily they have fallen into the habits and customs of civilization.

The schools in this district are still well attended, the Natives evincing great interest in them. New schools, at the request of the Natives, have been erected at Whangape, Omanaia, and Motukaraka. While on this subject, I would take the liberty of suggesting that it would be of great future advantage to the Natives, as a people, if some of the brightest lads from each school were selected—as they, as a race, have a peculiar aptitude for mechanics—for the purpose of being apprenticed, under approved masters, to the more useful trades, such as ship- and boat-building, carpentering, and cabinetmaking, and also as saddlers. At present, after being a few years at school, they return to their various settlements, or become labourers at sawmills, or work as squarers or bullock-drivers in the forests, their education being of but little use to them.

I have, &c.,

SPENCER VON STÜRMER,

The Under-Secretary, Native Office, Wellington.

Resident Magistrate.

No. 4.

Mr. J. S. CLENDON, R.M., Whangarei, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Whangarei, 23rd May, 1881.

In accordance with the request contained in your letter of the 23rd April last, I have the honor to report for the information of the Hon. the Native Minister the state of Native affairs in the several districts under my jurisdiction. The report for the Mangonui District, having been furnished by Mr. Kelly, does not require further comment from myself.