

When I say that there is a visible improvement in their social and physical state, I allude to their steady abandonment of gross utterances and conduct pertaining more to beasts, which were common amongst them—of improper intercourse, of habitual drunkenness. They now substitute good clothing for the filthy habiliments worn during the periods of political and superstitious disturbance. They are still improvident, and no advice to husband their resources has any influence. They take advantage of any frivolous pretexts to hold meetings, and so waste their means.

A large section of the Natives here profess to believe in prophets, or in men said to possess supernatural powers. Kere of the West and Paora Potangaroa of the East Coasts, both now at Te Oreore, have each taken the rôle of prophet; in such capacity they are, each for their separate districts, religious and secular guardians, though many do not believe in them, and the influence gained appears to be only temporary and at their assemblies.

Lately invitations were sent throughout this island to various tribes to assemble at Te Oreore, near Masterton, to hear some important revelations from Paora; only about three hundred and fifty from outside the district attended. As large numbers were expected, the Wairarapa Maoris exerted themselves to provide for the visitors. They exercised a variety of ingenious modes of raising money for the purchase of food and other articles of consumption. They drew largely from lessees of their lands in advance. One vied with the other in giving liberally, until an enormous mass of food was accumulated and wasted. Caution and advice were of no avail. Paora did not make a favourable impression as to his pretended prophecies. The greater part dispersed in disappointment, beyond having feasted well for about three weeks. The only conclusion come to was that Paora and Kere were to control their individual affairs. There was to be no land-selling, no leasing, no debts to be incurred, and no debts to be paid. These were decided in solemn conclave, but when the meeting was over they individually repudiated the compact, and things go on as regards land dealings, &c., as before. In fact generally they had expended all they had available, and force of circumstances compelled them to revert to European independence and privileges.

I am sorry to say that the warnings given of the result of their extravagance are being verified to a considerable extent. This is one of the causes of premature mortality of Maoris. There has been no decrease in the Maori population of the district during the past three years, but I fear, unless they abandon follies and excesses of the kind I have mentioned, poverty and starvation will result, and consequent disease and mortality.

The prejudice they always have exhibited towards the Native Land Court is unabated. There are large tracts of land in the Wairarapa District—about 100,000 acres—still reserved from the operation of the Native Land Act, and leased; though these leases are not valid they are preserved honorably between the parties. About the same rate of rent is paid as if the land was held under title from the Crown. Lessees are exempt from liability to pay duties. The owners and they get on well in their transactions. The costs attending the process of obtaining Crown grants are avoided. What cases come before the Court are, as a rule, reluctantly submitted for investigation; they are brought on by outside pressure, European importunities, and by some who have doubtful interests, and in cases where the land is intended to be sold.

During the past year Maori children attending public schools have been prohibited from attendance through their filthy condition, and antipathy of European parents to the contact of their children with Maoris. In Greytown several Maori children attended; they were declared infested with vermin, and prohibited from further attendance on that ground. I noticed on several occasions that European children in a body shewed their contempt in a practical manner by abusing the Maoris, who were in a considerable minority, and unable to resist. Maoris do not generally appear to appreciate the advantages of education, but when there are symptoms of a wish to avail themselves of the opportunity offered they should be encouraged to send their children to school. If their attendance is objectionable to parents as hitherto, a small ward might be set apart for their accommodation.

A greater respect and appreciation of law and authority are manifest, the arrogance and bounce of the past are subsided; they know they are impotent to gain anything contrary to law and justice. Firmness and unswerving adherence to what is just and proper by the authorities towards them gain respect and facilitates their government.

Under Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
E. S. MAUNSELL.

No. 14.

Mr. R. WARD, R.M., Marton, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrates' Office, Marton, 26th May, 1881.

I have the honor, in compliance with your request, to forward you my annual report on the Maoris within my district, and, in doing so, have very much pleasure in stating that there has been during the past twelve months a marked improvement in their physical, moral, and social condition. They do not drink nearly so much alcoholic liquor as they used to; they are more industrious and saving in their habits; their houses are cleaner, and they are generally better clothed. I think the great commercial depression that has been experienced in this colony has affected them to a certain extent. They have been forced to understand the value of money, and, knowing that, are more careful in spending it.

I regret to say I find the Natives are not sufficiently alive to the importance of educating their children, of which there are about 400 in my district under the age of fifteen years. Of this number I should think nearly 200 are of an age to be taught in our schools; yet, not more than about ten or twelve attend. This ought not to be.

I have reason to think that there is a slight improvement in the religious condition of the people. Not much, but a change tending in that direction. I again venture to express a hope that the various religious bodies of this colony will not omit the Maoris in preparing their programmes of "work to be done."

I may say I very rarely hear cases in my Court where Maoris are the litigants. In nearly every instance they settle their own differences and difficulties at their own *kaingas*. They appoint a committee of arbitrators, who hear and determine questions and cases brought under their consideration,