

I cannot conclude my report without referring to the deaths of Ihakara Tukumaru of Foxton, and Horomona Torenui of Otaki. Both these natives were men of rank, and have held the office of Native Assessors for many years with credit to themselves and to the satisfaction of those they had to do do with. They were both men well advanced in years, and have, I am informed, in years gone by, been staunch friends of, and stood by, our early colonists in their struggles to maintain a footing in New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

ROBERT WARD, R.M.

No. 15.

MR. A. MACKAY, Native Commissioner, Nelson, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department
SIR,— Government Buildings, Nelson, 6th May, 1881.

In compliance with your Circular Letter No. 15 of 23rd April, I have the honor to state that so little change takes place in the condition of the Natives in the South Island, that it is difficult to find anything special to base a report on. I have recently visited the majority of the settlements in Canterbury and Otago, and found the condition of the people much the same as before, and their character for sobriety and good behaviour still maintaining; convictions for offences are very rare; the majority of them have comfortable houses, and for the most part enjoy very good health; and their domestic habits are assimilating to the Europeans. Most of their houses are now built of wood, and contain three or four rooms, besides a kitchen. At a few of the settlements some of the dwellings are comfortable, commodious, and well furnished.

Little attention appears to be paid to agricultural pursuits, further than to raise a few crops for their own wants. Waikouaiti is the only thriving settlement; there the Natives own a good many sheep and cattle, and farm their land in the European style. They also own reaping- and thrashing-machines, besides all the necessary agricultural implements. The improved condition of these people is mainly attributable to the example and energy displayed by a half-caste named Tame Parata, a grand-nephew of the late Haereroa, one of the principal chiefs of Waikouaiti. At many of the other settlements poverty is steadily on the increase amongst the residents, and without some change is effected, the people will ultimately drift into a state of semi-starvation. The increase of civilization around them, besides curtailing the liberties they formerly enjoyed for fishing and catching birds, has also compelled the adoption of a different and more expensive mode of life, which they find very difficult to support; this gets them into debt with the tradesmen, and the puzzle is how they manage to exist at all, as regular employment is not to be obtained, and the scanty crops that are raised are insufficient for their own use. A few of them receive a small income by letting their land; but the money is usually anticipated a year or so in advance.

The Natives in the South have been anxiously waiting for some time past the results of the Commission appointed to investigate the Middle Island Claims, in the hope that some satisfactory arrangement may be come to, which will ultimately benefit them and prove a reparation for the remissness of the past. Common justice requires that substantial atonement should be made them for long years of neglect, and it is to be hoped that the question will now meet with a speedy and satisfactory settlement.

A matter that has inflicted a serious injury on the Natives of late years, and for the most part ruined the value of the fishery easements granted by the Native Land Court, is the action of the Acclimatization societies in stocking many of the streams and lakes with imported fish. These fish are protected by special legislation, consequently the Natives are debarred from using nets for catching the whitebait in season, or can they catch eels or other Native fish in these streams for fear of transgressing the law. They complain that, although they have a close season for eels, the Europeans catch them all the year round. In olden times the Natives had control of these matters, but the advent of the Europeans and the settlement of the country changed this state of affairs and destroyed the protection that formerly existed, consequently their *mahinga kai* (food-producing places) are rendered more worthless every year, and, in addition to this, on going fishing or bird-catching, they are frequently ordered off by the settlers if they happen to have no reserve in the locality. This state of affairs, combined with the injury done to their fisheries by the drainage of the country, inflicts a heavy loss on them annually and plunges them further into debt, or keeps them in a state of privation. All this is very harassing to a people who not long since owned the whole of the territory now occupied by another race, and it is not surprising that discontent prevails, or that progress or prosperity is impossible. The small quantity of land also held per individual—viz., fourteen acres, and in some cases the maximum quantity is less—altogether precludes the possibility of the Natives raising themselves above the position of peasants. A European farmer finds even a hundred acres too small to be payable, and is frequently compelled by circumstances to have recourse to the money-lender, and probably in the end loses his farm through inability to meet his engagements. This is by no means an isolated case, and demonstrates forcibly that small holdings in the present state of New Zealand are not conducive to prosperity, even when managed to the best advantage, which is not the case with land occupied by the Natives.

Considerable efforts have been made during the last thirteen years to educate the Native children, but a good deal yet remains to be done to make provision for all who could attend. The census taken last month shows that there is a non-adult population of 838 in this part of the colony, only 305 of whom are attending school. In 1874 there were only five Native schools in the South Island, and two District Schools receiving aid from the Government; the attendance then was about 120, since then eight fresh schools have been opened in different localities, and another is ready to be opened at Oraka, on the Natives returning from the Titi Islands. There are other settlements, however, where a number of children reside, that have not yet been provided with schools. The following are the localities alluded to, and the number of children at each are: Taumutu, 18; Arowhenua, 54; Waimate, 17; Waitaki, 37; Moeraki, 42.

Schools would have been established at Arowhenua and Moeraki long ago, if it had not been for the foolish opposition displayed by the parents, under the impression that any benefit derived in that way would militate against their claim for compensation for unfulfilled promises.