

year, for which they have been rewarded with an abundant crop of potatoes, which is their staple food. The maize crop, however, has been partly a failure, owing to the cold winds that prevailed when the plants were quite young, which had the effect of spoiling nearly the whole crop.

*Social Position.*

The social position of the Natives in this district has considerably improved during the past year. There has been very little drunkenness—indeed, so far as regards the Waikatos at Whatiwhatihoe and the Ngatimaniapoto, the absence of it has been quite marked. There have been only two cases of drunkenness tried at the Alexandra Courthouse during the past year, whilst at Te Awamutu there have been two for drunkenness, two for larceny, and one for malicious injury to property. When one considers the number of Natives that are continually frequenting these settlements (including Kihikihi, where there is no Court), it is, I think a matter for congratulation that there should be such an absence of drunkenness and crime.

There is one place, however, within my district the Natives of which are not so fully entitled to the above good character for temperance, and that is Kawhia. There is no doubt that on one or two occasions the Natives of that place have been able, either on their own application or through the assistance of some of the Armed Constabulary Force located there, to obtain liquor from the canteen, and cases of drunkenness and debauchery have been the result. But I am satisfied that instances of this sort have been the exception and not the rule during the past twelve months, and that when they have occurred it has been because the person in charge of the canteen has allowed the Natives to have liquor without the consent of, and unknown to, the officer in charge of the garrison. This evil could, I think, be met with by making more stringent rules regarding the supply of liquor to Natives at that place, and by instituting a more strict supervision in order to see that those rules are carried out.

The Natives (as a body) all through the district are very much against the introduction of any kind of intoxicating liquor into what is known as Native territory or the King country. The wave—I might almost say tidal wave—of temperance that seems to have lately visited European communities has to a great extent extended to the Natives. I find it so not only here, but also in the Thames (Hauraki) District, and I believe it will be found in other districts as well. A number of Natives, who used to be notorious for their tippling propensities, have now reduced their drinking to a minimum, whilst others have renounced it altogether and have joined the ranks of the Blue Ribbon Army.

Advantage is being taken of the present feeling of the Natives regarding the drink question by Messrs. C. O. Davis and T. B. Hill, of Auckland, assisted by Mr. Graham Tawhai, of the Bay of Islands, and Mr. Arthur Ormsby (half-caste), of Kopua, all of whom have the welfare of the Maoris at heart. Those gentlemen are at present visiting the different settlements in this district for the purpose of getting a petition signed by the Natives, praying His Excellency the Governor not to sanction any license for the sale of intoxicating liquor within the boundaries of the King country.

Although a few of the Kawhia Natives may have misconducted themselves in this matter, I think there is no doubt that the majority of the Natives of that place would rather that drink should not be introduced in their midst, as it will be remembered that, at the meeting they had with His Excellency at Kawhia in March last, some of them publicly asked him to use his power in preventing drink from being brought amongst them.

I am glad also to be able to report that, with the increase of industry and the comparative absence of drunkenness and crime, those Natives who live at and near Whatiwhatihoe have considerably improved their dwelling-houses and settlements. The houses are now mostly larger and better built than they used to be, and some of them have been erected in such a manner as to allow horses and conveyances to pass between them. Considering the number of Natives that sometimes congregate there, this settlement will compare very favourably with any other that I know of for cleanliness.

Unfortunately, despite all these signs of improvement in their social condition, I am sorry to say that their physical condition does not improve in a corresponding degree. Sickness is still very prevalent amongst them, and, although there has been nothing of an epidemic character, still consumption, asthma, low fever, and inflammation of the lungs have been busy at work during the past year, and a considerable number of deaths from those causes have been the result. Death has also been busy amongst the children, a number of whom have succumbed, notwithstanding the fact that the Government supply medicines free of cost for all cases of Native sickness that are brought under my notice. With regard to the mortality amongst children, I am of opinion that a great deal of it is caused by want of nourishment, as the scanty food upon which the Natives usually subsist is not at all suitable for the rearing of young children, so that, when through want of nourishment they once fall ill, their speedy death may, in most cases, be looked upon as a matter of course. Only the naturally strong and robust can stand the ordeal that the ordinary Native child has to pass through from the time of its birth until it is about twelve years old. With them it is truly "the survival of the fittest," that is, so far as constitution is concerned.

Now that the Natives have got in their crops, some of the more industrious of them are engaging themselves to European farmers for the purpose of assisting them in threshing their