

I am glad to be able to report an improvement in the sobriety of the Natives in this district; there is no doubt that they drink much less than a few years ago. In regard to criminal statistics: In the Police Courts at Tauranga and Waterford there have been ten charges laid against Natives, of which only four resulted in convictions. The offence was not in any case serious. In the Resident Magistrate's Court nineteen civil cases have been heard, in which one party was a European and the other a Maori, but only two in which both parties were Natives. In this district they continue to settle their petty disputes through their own Committees. Two Native schools, at Huria and Te Wairoa, in addition to the one already existing, have been opened during the year. The attendance at all three is fair, and the Natives are beginning to show interest in the question of education, which they have not done before to any extent.

II.—Rotorua-Maketu District.

There is little alteration to remark in the general condition of the Natives of this district. The resident medical officer at Ohinemutu, Dr. Lewis, attends Natives gratuitously, and supplies of simple medicines have been deposited as usual at the various Native schools. The Natives in parts of the district were short of food during the early spring of last year, and I fear will be so more generally this year, as the crops of kumara and maize are very light in some parts. However they had good potato crops. At the Ohinemutu Resident Magistrate's Court the criminal charges against Natives were—larceny, 4; assault, 1; drunkenness, 4; miscellaneous, 2: total, 11. Of these, eight resulted in summary convictions and three were dismissed. The civil cases in which Maoris were concerned were—between Maoris and Europeans, 10; cases in which both parties were Natives, 15: total, 25. Mr. Bush has continued to take the magisterial work at Maketu, and, owing to the resignation of the Clerk, I have been unable to obtain the Court statistics to embody in this report.

The Native Land Court has been sitting for some time at Ohinemutu, and is subdividing the blocks within the Thermal Springs boundary, in order that lands may be set aside for railway endowments and for leasing. The titles are complicated, and progress necessarily slow, but I am informed by the chiefs that they intend to ask the Court to sit continuously for a year, in order that the tribal lands may be divided amongst the hapus. If this is done, great progress will be made, and, it is hoped, many blocks open for leasing shortly.

The six schools for Natives in this district continue to be well attended. At two of them the increase in the number of scholars is very marked, and I notice that the Natives show increased interest in the education of their children.

An election of a Committee under the Native Committees Act of last session took place at Ohinemutu in March last. The district for which the Committee was elected comprised those of Tauranga, Maketu, Rotorua, and Taupo. Very few Natives voted, and very little interest was taken in the matter. This the Natives account for by saying that the district was too large, and that what they want is a Committee for each tribe.

III.—Opotiki District.

I have not had occasion to visit this district during the past year, but I propose to proceed to Whakatane next month, to arrange the titles to returned lands still unsettled within the confiscated block.

IV.—Tauranga Commissioner's Court.

The work of investigating the titles to the lands in the Tauranga District I have proceeded with as fast as circumstances would allow. Adjournments are continually applied for, to enable the Natives to attend Land Courts and contest cases in the adjoining districts. I have to remark also that a considerable quantity of land, which I had until lately supposed had been finally settled by previous Commissioners, I have now ascertained will have to be dealt with by me. During the year ended the 31st March the following has been the work done: I have sat with an Assessor in Court eighty-six days. I have heard sixteen new claims, amounting to 5,091 acres. I have subdivided six blocks, comprising 11,355 acres. I have also settled the lists of names for nineteen blocks, the title to which had been previously investigated either by myself or by previous Commissioners. I have issued fifty-one certificates for blocks, representing in the whole 36,802 acres. Of this area the title to 4,555 acres was investigated by previous Commissioners, and that to 32,247 acres by myself. The work still to be performed is the investigation of title to about 3,500 acres of reserves, which will have to be divided into from twenty-five to thirty subdivisions. There is also a block of 6,500 acres to be further subdivided, and the title has to be investigated of Tuhua or Mayor Island, 3154 acres, which is included in the district.

I have, &c.,

HERBERT W. BRABANT, R.M.,

Native Officer, Bay of Plenty.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

No. 7.

R. S. BUSH, Esq., R.M., Opotiki, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrates' Office, Opotiki, 8th May, 1884.

In compliance with your circular letter I have the honour to furnish the usual annual report on the Natives of this district,