

*Condition of the Natives.*

No very marked change in the condition of the Natives generally is noticeable, although there are many cases where improvement is perceptible, not only amongst individual Natives, but also in tribes and hapus. This improvement, though slight, is in a great measure attributable to the influence of the chief of the tribe, who, if a sober, upright, and industrious person, with the welfare of his tribe at heart, endeavours by his counsel to make them imitate him. The most marked instances of this are the Ngaitai, or Wiremu Kingi's people, at Torere; the Ngatira section of the Whakatohea, residing at Waioeka, under Hira te Popo; the Whanau-a-Ihutu, at Te Kaha, and the Whanau-a-Maru, or Te Hata's people, at Raukokore. The Whanau-a-Apanui, at Maraenui and Omaio, and the Whakatohea at Omarumutu and Opotiki, for want of industrious and right-thinking men at their head to guide them, are much behind the tribes first mentioned in many respects. The Whakatohea prefer to be left to their own resources, and resent the advice and counsel of other tribes or chiefs, much to their own detriment. The Natives resident at other parts of the district might improve their condition considerably by following the example of the Ngaitai, Te Kaha, Raukokore, and Waioeka tribes.

There has been no epidemic or disease of a serious nature amongst the Natives since my last report, but I regret to say that the Whakatohea, resident at Omarumutu and Tirohanga, the two kaingas where the outbreak of typhoid fever occurred last year, and which the doctor advised should be abandoned, are still occupying them. The only chiefs of note who have died during the year are Te Waru and Hapurona Kohi. The former, who since his surrender has been living on a reserve at Waiotahi, died of consumption; and the latter, an old Urewera chief of some note, resident at Ahikereru, evidently of old age.

*Disposition.*

There is no ground for complaint as to the conduct and disposition of the Natives, which will compare favourably with that of those of most districts. No crimes of a serious nature have been committed. About sixty Natives have been charged in the Police Court with offences, consisting principally of breaches of the peace, drunkenness, and offences on roads. Besides the above there have been a few cases of larceny of a trivial nature, which are, however, included in the number given above. Out of the sixty some fifty were convicted. In the Resident Magistrate's Court there have been sixty cases in which Natives have been concerned, namely, thirty-eight in which Maoris were defendants, seven in which they were plaintiffs, and fifteen in which both parties were Natives. As a general rule the judgments of the Court are satisfied without further proceedings.

Wiremu Kingi, of Torere, has made a strong stand against the use of the Te Kooti form of church service, and I am glad to report that he has succeeded in stamping it out altogether amongst his own people, and nearly so amongst the tribes resident from Torere to Cape Runaway, with the whole of whom he is more or less connected, and over whom he exercises considerable influence. A church is being erected at Te Kaha, and money being collected to provide a fund to pay the stipend of a resident Native clergyman. During the recent visit of the Bishop of Waiapu to Te Kaha and other settlements between that place and Opotiki, considerable numbers of Natives collected at the various villages to meet and hear him. The Kaha people arranged to have their new church finished and ready for consecration by next Christmas, at which time they also propose having their burial-place consecrated. It is evident from the activity displayed by these tribes in church matters that the time is not far distant when the Natives, at any rate in that part of the district, will return to the religion taught them by the early missionaries.

Nothing of more than ordinary interest has occurred to agitate the Native mind, except the visits of Te Kooti and Sydney Taiwhanga. Te Kooti visited nearly all the settlements from Rotorua to Whakatane, and from Whakatane to Thames. He did not come to Opotiki. It is generally believed by the Natives at Whakatane that Te Kooti originally intended continuing his journey to Gisborne, but that he was deterred from doing so from information he gathered at Whakatane. His companions, when visiting the Village of Whakatane, never lost an opportunity of inquiring from both Europeans and Natives as to the opinion of the Poverty Bay people on his movements. The general reply was that he would not be welcomed there; in fact, his presence in that district might be even dangerous to him. The object of his visit seems to have been to make peace with the various tribes against whom he fought, and members of which had been killed during the time he was in rebellion. No other reason has been assigned for his visit. While he was at Whakatane, Wiremu Kingi, by previous arrangement, pointed out to the assembled people, in the presence of Te Kooti himself, "that he (Te Kooti) was not there that day as the Te Kooti of former years, but there owing to the clemency of the Crown, and in consequence of his late meeting with the Hon. the Native Minister at Waikato." To this Te Kooti assented. So far as I have been able to learn, Te Kooti's demeanour throughout his journey and stay at the various settlements in the Bay of Plenty was most quiet and respectful.

A few weeks ago Sydney Taiwhanga arrived at Opotiki, in response to an invitation from the Whakatohea. This tribe was the only one here which fêted him, and collected money to further the object which he professed to have in view, namely, to raise a sum of money to enable Tawhiao, himself, and other chiefs to visit England, with the object of seeking redress for the grievances of the Maori people. The Whakatohea collected about £40, which they handed to him. Sydney is said to have informed the Natives that the object of the mission to England was to