

No. 5.

Mr. G. T. WILKINSON, Native Agent, Alexandra, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Native Office, Alexandra, 25th May, 1886.

In accordance with the request contained in your Circular No. 2 of the 24th March last, I have the honour to forward herewith my annual report upon the state of the Natives in my districts.

Waikato (including Kawhia, Waipa, and Upper Mokau).

With the exception of the King Natives living at Whatiwhatihoe, the health of the Natives all through this district has been fairly good during the past year. Those, however, living at the above-mentioned settlement, in addition to their ordinary ills, such as coughs, colds, asthma, &c., have suffered from an epidemic of low fever, coupled with a sort of erysipelas in the head, which, when not taken in time, proved in some cases fatal. I think the disease was similar to that which attacked the Parihaka Natives some months ago, but not of such a malignant form. Thanks, however, to the fact that the Government Medical Officer (Mr. Aubin) was close at hand with the necessary skill and medicine to deal with the epidemic, its effects were not nearly so disastrous as they otherwise might have been. The reason why it affected the Whatiwhatihoe Natives more than those of other settlements is, I think, because they are more lazy and dirty in their habits, and are more ill-fed and less properly-clothed than the Natives of most of the other settlements within my district. They seem to spend most of their time, and what little energy they have got, in political meetings, discussions, and plottings, rather than, by industry and labour, providing food and raiment for themselves, their wives, and their families.

There have been a number of circumstances of a more or less eventful character during the past year within this district. In May last the Ngatiraukawa-Ngatimaniapoto chief and pensioner, Rewi Maniapoto, of Kihikihi, gave another exhibition of his fickleness of character and love of change by listening with a willing ear to the beguiling tongue of the Mokau chief, Wetere te Rerenga, who was then, and is now, I believe, a firm believer in and supporter of the quondam prophet Te Whiti. Wetere te Rerenga paid a visit to this district, evidently with a mission; and he so gained the ear of Rewi, and impressed him with his views from a Parihaka standpoint, that he actually persuaded the old gentleman to agree to accompany him—it was said only as far as Waitara; but rumour, which is generally right in matters of this sort, gave out that Rewi's real destination was Parihaka. They proceeded on the journey by going up the Waipa and Manga-o-Kewa Rivers in a canoe as far as Te Kumi, from which place the rest of the journey as far as Totoro, on the Mokau River, had to be made overland. This, however, proved too much for Rewi on account of his old age and feeble health, so, after staying two or three weeks at Te Kumi, he returned to his home at Kihikihi, time and circumstances having again caused the old man to change his mind. Notwithstanding his age (about eighty) his health has been very good of late—so much so that he has been able to attend the Land Court that was held a short time since at Taupo, and to look after some of his land-claims that were being dealt with by that Court.

On the 5th August last the well-known old chief Manuhiri, or Tamati Ngapora (the name he was formerly known by), died at Whatiwhatihoe at an advanced age. It is said that he was able to bear firearms at the time of the Ngapuhi invasion of Waikato and the attack on the Matakitaiki Pa, near Alexandra, which took place in 1821. Allowing him, therefore, to be about sixteen years old at that time, he would be about eighty at the time of his death. As I gave you a short sketch of his history when I wrote informing you of his death, I need not dwell further upon the subject now.

During the month of August I paid a visit to the Matahuru Valley district, and on to Upper Piako, in consequence of some obstruction that had been offered by the Natives of those localities to Mr. Charles Stevens, a surveyor, who was engaged in making some Government surveys in that district. I was able, before leaving, to get the Natives to cease obstructing; but a question cropped up during a meeting I had with the Upper Piako Natives at Te-hoe-a-Tainui settlement, which showed there is a misunderstanding on the part of either those Natives or the Government as to the ownership of a block of land containing some seven thousand acres adjoining the Te-hoe-a-Tainui settlement. The Natives claim it as a reserve given to them by Mr. James Mackay and Dr. Pollen some years ago; but the Government appear to look upon it as Crown land. I made inquiry, and reported fully to you upon the matter on my return to my office. I have not, however, yet been informed what decision the Government has come to regarding the question at issue.

It was also in the month of August that some of the Ngatihaua Natives living at Maungakawa caused some local excitement by forcibly obstructing the contractor (Mr. Fallon) for a portion of the Morrinsville-Rotorua Railway line. They assembled at a railway-bridge for the purpose of preventing his men from laying the rails over it. A regular *fracas* occurred, and one young Native was injured, but not seriously, by being thrown from the bridge. An attempt was also made by the Natives to demolish the bridge by chopping one or more of the piles with an axe. The obstruction was of such a determined nature that the contractor had to go into Hamilton and take out warrants for the arrest of the ringleaders. Sergeant-Major McGovern,