

Religion among the Maoris is in a suspended state. They became in the past converts to many faiths. Joining in the early days Christian denominations, their pastors abandoned them and sought other fields. Then Hauhauism became a religion to their way of thinking, only to die out. A faith in "prophets," men who gained great ascendancy over them, lasted for a time. Few of these "prophets" are now alive. No memento of their worth remains. A good "tangi" and a feast commemorated their deaths. Mormon elders have been among them, gaining many converts; but a paucity of women in the district—in the Maori eye a *sine quâ non* in Mormonism—and the call to contribute to the maintenance of these elders influenced them to drop this "karakia" religion. The elders came from Utah, and endeavoured without avail to persuade the leading chiefs to return with them to Salt Lake City. The various church societies cannot be praised on their zeal to evangelize this race. A fair field remains open.

Reviewing the general condition of the Maoris in the Wairarapa, I may report that they are not dying out; they have abundant means for their support in the way of land, but are very lazy, and subsist largely on their wits after their rents have been expended.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington

I have, &c.,

E. S. MAUNSELL.

No. 12.

Mr. R. WARD, R.M., Wanganui, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Wanganui, 24th April, 1886.

In reporting on the state of the Natives in my district, I am glad to be able to say that there is a steady improvement in their moral and religious condition. Their habits of life are more satisfactory in nearly every respect. They have in some parts built better dwellings, and their cultivations, though not large, are sufficient for their requirements, taken in conjunction with their flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, and numerous pigs. In the settled districts they live more like their European neighbours. I am also glad to say that their numbers have kept up during the past five years, particularly in the counties of Rangitikei, Oroua, Manawatu, and Horowhenua. I believe their sober habits are telling advantageously on them. From the census return of those living up the Wanganui River and at Murimotu, there appears to be a decrease of between 600 and 700 on the number of the approximate return of 1881. This decrease is, I am inclined to think, more apparent than real, as it is known that a great many were visiting at Parihaka and other places when the census was taken; still, I am afraid there is in the part of the district indicated somewhat of a decrease. The returns for this census-year for the four counties I have first mentioned show an increase of over two hundred.

The Natives visiting this town from up the Wanganui River and other places in that direction complain of the want of accommodation here. They live in little calico tents, which offer but poor shelter from the inclemency of the weather. What is really required is a large house as a barracks, and another building as a storehouse for their produce when they bring it to the town market. I have tried in vain to find a convenient and suitable site whereon to erect the buildings. On examining the Harbour Board maps I found shown thereon a site set apart for this very purpose, and indicated as a Native reserve; but on looking for the locality I found that it has been submerged by the encroachments of our fine river. I have been, and am still, sorely puzzled to know what to do in this matter. Something will have to be done for these poor people, as they often have to stay in town a long time while attending the sittings of the Native Land Court and in selling their produce, and often suffer very considerable hardship for want of needful shelter.

Churton's College is the means of doing a great deal of good. It is well attended, and the pupils are making most satisfactory progress in their studies and acquirement of refined habits. I am glad to say the school has still the advantage of being under the control and management of Mr. and Mrs. Menzies, than whom none more suitable could be obtained. This school is in the fullest sense of the term a great blessing to many.

I am pleased to be able to say that the Native Land Court has got through an immense amount of work here during the past year: the titles to large blocks of land have been investigated and determined, and the Government have purchased large blocks at fair rates from the Native owners, which will, I understand, in due course be thrown open for settlement. I rejoice also to report that the feeling of the Natives towards the Government seems to be of a most satisfactory character. They realize that they are being dealt with fairly, and that Parliament is actuated by a strong desire to preserve, in a way not to interfere with colonization, the best interests of the Native race. Their chiefs evince a strong wish to do all they can to cement the cordial feeling which exists between them and the pakehas.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT WARD,

Resident Magistrate.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.