

The returns of the various settlements have been most carefully compiled ; and, although a vast extent of country has been covered, owing to the Natives at this time of the year being scattered in every direction over the different gumfields, I have no hesitation in saying that the numbers now returned can be relied upon as strictly correct. I appointed two gentlemen as Sub-enumerators who are thoroughly acquainted both with the district and with the Natives, one taking the northern and the other the southern portion of the county. I impressed upon them the necessity of using their most earnest endeavours to make the census as accurate as possible, and I have every reason to believe that they have succeeded in so doing.

In some instances the Natives were very suspicious of the sub-enumerators, and appeared very unwilling to supply the information sought for ; but this difficulty was overcome to a great extent by the exercise of a little tact. At one place, however, called Taipa, the leading Native, Te Wiremu Pikahu, refused in most insolent terms to allow the Sub-enumerator to get the information he desired, alleging as a reason for his refusal that he was quite sure there was an ulterior motive on the part of the Government, probably the collection of a poll-tax or such like ; and the same man sent emissaries on horseback to the surrounding settlements, warning them to beware of the “taniwha.” Very fortunately, we were able to outwit this cantankerous old Native by the good offices of the Native clergyman, who, having kept written up a complete register of all the inhabitants of his parish, very kindly placed the information at our disposal.

The returns of stock and land under cultivation must be taken as only being approximate. Natives have, as a rule, very hazy notions of number and quantity, and will often simply guess to save the trouble of calculating.

It was found quite impossible, save in a few instances, to compute the area of individual cultivation, and therefore the returns are mostly given of acres in common cultivation.

In comparing this census with that taken in 1881 it will be necessary to note that thirteen settlements now included in my returns for the Mangonui County were then returned in the Bay of Islands District. They are: Pupuke, Waihapā, Patunga, Kaeo, Upokorau, Taupo, Okomoko, Towai, Mahinepua, Te Wainui, Te Ngaere, Matauri, and Takou. Taking the figures of 1881 the total returns for the Mangonui County, including these kaingas, was 2,376 ; and this, compared with my present return of 2,101, shows a decrease of 275.

The Natives in this district just now are very healthy and free from any disease or epidemic. Two years ago there was great mortality throughout the north from typhoid fever, mostly of young people, and I should say that the decrease in population is attributable to the ravages of that fever. Each year, as the spring comes round, there is great prevalence of a type of low fever amongst the children, more or less fatal, according to the season. Until a radical change for the better takes place in their mode of living, the Natives will be always liable to be visited by periodical epidemics.

I have, &c.,

H. W. BISHOP,

Resident Magistrate.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

No. 3.

Mr. S. VON STÜRMER, R.M., Hokianga, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Hokianga, 3rd April, 1886.

I have the honour to transmit herewith the returns of the Native census of the County of Hokianga, taken in February last, according to the instructions contained in your circular letter of the 30th December, 1885.

The Maori census for 1874 shows a population of 2,796, that of 1878, 2,570, while that of 1881 is 2,828, thus showing a considerable increase. This I do not consider was altogether reliable, as a portion of the return was an estimate only, owing to Native obstruction, and also that all the Natives residing on the north bank of the Herekino River were included in those returns. On the present occasion they will be incorporated in the Mangonui returns as residing in that county.

The census now forwarded shows a falling-off from that of 1878 (this was a most carefully-taken census) of 219. The decrease is however more apparent than real, as upwards of one hundred persons are absent from Omanaia, Whangape, Whirinaki, and other places, gum-digging at Kaipara and Mangonui ; but to all who are acquainted with the Natives it is plain to see that they are steadily decreasing in numbers. A considerable number of children are born to them, but, alas, how few pass through the first stages of infancy ! improper food, exposure, want of ordinary care and cleanliness, constitutions of the parents debilitated by past debauchery, and last though not least the “tohunga,” are answerable for much of this ; the most enlightened of them preferring to place their sick in the hands of the Native doctor (“tohunga”) to applying to the medical officer of the district until the patient is reduced to such a state as to be almost past help. Since this census was taken I have entered in my Native register five deaths, all from the same cause, namely, disease of the lungs. This tells its own tale, and is undoubtedly the outcome of undue exposure and want of sufficient or proper nourishment. And until the gumfields are exhausted I have but a slight hope of any improvement. Whilst away gum-digging, their cultivations and dwellings are neglected, and when they return home,