

reason, possibly, was the very limited powers given to the Committees, as they can only act where both parties to a suit are agreeable to put the matter into their hands. But I think the most important reason—that is, so far as this district is concerned—is the fact that, now the land is being passed through the Court, and settlement is commencing to take place, the owners of the land see that property in land means money and social position, and they prefer each one to look after his own rather than trust their affairs to the hands of a Committee, some of the members of which may be, or have been, in opposition to them regarding claims to land, &c.

*Native Schools.*—The Native schools within my districts—viz., at Kopua, Te Waotu, Tapapa, Waitetuna, and Kirikiri (Thames)—are in a fairly flourishing condition, that at Te Waotu being the best so far as attendance goes. There is generally a difficulty experienced in first establishing a school in a Native district, especially where the ownership of the land in the locality is disputed, and has not been decided by the Native Land Court. But when once the school is established the Natives recognise and take advantage of the value of education by making their children attend it. One of the great drawbacks, however, is the irregularity of the attendance of the scholars, as when the parents go away on gum-digging and other expeditions they generally take their children with them. Taken as a whole, however, I think both the Education and Native Departments can be congratulated on the success that is attending their efforts to educate the young Maoris of the present generation. The attendance at the Kopua School would be much increased during the winter months if two of the creeks near to the school had small wire suspension-bridges put over them, as they have both to be crossed by nearly all the children who live to the west or north of the school, and, as these creeks are nearly always in flood during about four or five months of the year, the children run a great risk in attempting to ford them or cross over in small canoes. A request to have this done was made by the Natives to the Hon. the Native Minister at his meeting with Ngatinaniapoto at Otorohanga.

The record of crime and misdemeanour amongst the Natives and half-castes within the Waikato, Te Aroha, Ohinemuri, Thames, and Coromandel districts during the past year has been very small indeed.

I have, &c.,

G. T. WILKINSON,  
Government Native Agent and Land-purchase Officer,  
Waikato, Thames, and Auckland.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

## No. 5.

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

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Opotiki, 8th May, 1888.

In reply to your circular letter of the 25th ultimo I have the honour to furnish the usual annual report on the Natives in the district under my charge.

*Condition of the Natives.*—There appears to be a gradual improvement taking place in the condition of the Natives in this portion of my district, but it is scarcely perceivable to any one who does not make it his business to carefully watch the Maoris. In a few years, when it becomes more general, I have no doubt it will be more perceptible. Year by year the Natives appear to be better supplied with clothing and other necessities of life. In this locality they are becoming quite self-reliant: such a thing as asking the Government for carts, ploughs, or other agricultural implements has quite gone out of fashion, so much so that no Native ever thinks of making a request for such articles. At first I experienced considerable difficulty in persuading them to give up making application for such things; but by degrees they seemed to acknowledge that it was better to rely upon themselves for these articles than to beg them from the Government, and now such an application is an unheard-of thing in this portion of the district. The Natives here have maintained their character for sobriety and orderly behaviour. Since the last report only sixteen Natives have been convicted of drunkenness; three charged with larceny, of whom two were convicted; three charged with assault, of whom two were convicted; and one convicted of furious riding. In the Resident Magistrate's Court not as many cases have taken place amongst the Natives this year as in previous ones, but in all the cases the judgments have been satisfied. The doctor has been freely used by the Natives during the past year; but I am happy to report no serious epidemic has taken place amongst them. It is strange that the Maori, with the proofs of many cures in really serious cases before his eyes, should tamper with himself after paying the doctor a visit or two; the more so as in nearly all such cases the patient generally dies. The Native treatment seldom cures; indeed, it cannot in any serious case, which requires professional care, strict course of diet, and careful nursing: yet, with marvellous recoveries in cases attended by the doctor before them, they are still satisfied to allow themselves to become victims to their old superstitions. Time and perseverance appear to be the only means by which we can hope ultimately to prevent their sacrificing their lives to their old Native customs. The doctor spares neither time nor trouble in attending to their wants, and many Natives are indebted to his care and attention for their recoveries. Many Natives have lost their lives during the past two years through following the practice of immersing themselves in cold water with their clothes on, and then allowing them to dry on their bodies. This is done when a relation dies and is buried. It is said to be a part of the Te Kooti faith. Anything more suicidal cannot be conceived. However, lately the Natives have not practised this part of the ceremony, it having been pointed out by me to them that if they persisted in following this practice they would very soon bury the last of their number. The effects of the late Tarawera eruption appear to have passed away, and those Natives who left Whakatane and Te Teko for Galatea, at Kooti's instruction, have all returned to their former kaingas.

*Disposition.*—The conduct of the Natives throughout the past year has been peaceful and friendly. Kooti-ism still appears to be the only disturbing element amongst them. Those Natives