

There has been very little sickness amongst the Natives. I regret to report the death of the brave and loyal chief Renata Kawepo, which took place at Omaha on the 14th ultimo. The deceased chief had sent invitations to a large number of Natives to attend a Native meeting to be held at Omaha on the 16th April. He was very anxious to see everything carried out, and exposed himself in superintending the building of a Native meeting-house. He caught a chill, and had to take to his bed; and, although every attention was shown to him, he died on the Saturday before the meeting was to take place. This chief was one of the few remaining men of the old stamp: he was a man whose word was his bond, and who in no way deteriorated through being mixed up with land-matters, as is, I regret to say, the case with many Natives.

Disposition of Native Lands.—The Natives have not in any way availed themselves of the provisions of "The Native Lands Administration Act, 1886." They look on the clauses with respect to placing the land in the hands of Native Committees with great suspicion. I think that the Act might have worked if it had been shorn of those clauses. The Natives do not care about placing reliance in people of their own race: they have learned experience by the Act of 1865, when the land was placed in the hands of ten grantees, the Natives being under the impression that they were only holding in trust for the benefit of the tribe; whereas Crown-grants were issued to them, and they dealt with the lands as absolute owners. I am of opinion that, whatever mode of alienation of Native lands is adopted by the Legislature, that it will be necessary the titles should be individualised as much as possible by the Native Land Court before sales are allowed to take place. This could be done either by subdivision or by ascertaining the proportionate interest of the several owners in each block as it passes through the Native Land Court. I am satisfied that a great deal of time, and trouble, and expense can be saved by subdividing the land immediately after it has been adjudicated upon in large blocks. The Judges who have heard the evidence of the contending parties could come to a better decision as to their relative interests than other Judges hearing the case years after, with only the notes of the original case before them, and other witnesses, and the land having been occupied in the interval under altogether different circumstances.

The following cases in which Maoris were concerned have been heard in the Resident Magistrates' Courts at Napier, Hastings, Waipawa, Ormondville, and Woodville, viz.:—

Criminal Cases.—False pretences—convicted, 1; Sheep Act—discharged, 1; dismissed, 4; Police Offences Act—convicted, 3; discharged with caution, 1; borough by-laws—convicted, 2; discharged with caution, 1; drunkenness—convicted, 14; dismissed, 1; contempt of court—dismissed, 1.

Civil Cases.—European plaintiffs, Maori defendants: Amount sued for, £1,987 5s. 9d.; recovered, £1,489 8s. 7d. Maori plaintiffs, European defendants: Sued for, £50 2s.; recovered, £30 1s. 6d. Maori v. Maori, nil.

Wairoa District.

The Natives of this district have grown about 4,600 bushels of wheat, 4,500 bushels of oats, and 8,000 bushels of maize. At Mahia they caught thirty whales, of the value of about £300; but owing to the low price ruling for whale-oil the Natives have not taken such interest this year in this industry as in previous years. About 155 bales of wool have been sold by the Natives from the different flocks of sheep during this season.

The following cases in which Natives were concerned were heard in the Resident Magistrate's Court at Wairoa during the year, viz.:—

Criminal Cases.—Malicious injury to property—dismissed, 1; forgery—committed for trial, 1; burglary—discharged, 1; Public Works Act—convicted, 1; Police Offences Act—convicted, 3; drunkenness—convicted, 7.

Civil Cases.—European plaintiffs and Maori defendants: Amount sued for, £176 3s. 11d.; recovered, £88 16s. 4d. Maori plaintiffs and European defendants: Amount sued for, £40 8s.; recovered, £16 4s. Maori plaintiffs and Maori defendants: Amount sued for, £165 7s. 8d.; recovered, £56 15s. 2d.

A large number of applications for subdivision and succession claims have been made in this district, and the Natives have been very much dissatisfied at the fact of the claims having been accumulating for the last three years without being disposed of. This, however, will now be settled, as the Court is now sitting in the district, where it will have a considerable amount of work to get through.

General Disposition of Natives.—There is a thoroughly good feeling existing between the Natives and Europeans; they frequently join the Europeans in athletic sports, cricket, football, &c. There have been no disturbing influences amongst them this year, and the friendly Natives were pleased at the action of the Government in preventing Te Kooti from parading the district where he committed such atrocities a few years ago amongst both Europeans and Natives.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE S. PREECE,
Resident Magistrate.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

No. 7.

Mr. W. RENNELL, Reserves Trustee, New Plymouth, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

New Plymouth, 26th May, 1888.

Replying to your letter of the 25th April last, I have the honour to state that there is very little of any political importance in Native matters to report in my district.

The past year has been the quietest for many years past, and no rumours of what Te Whiti was going to do to disturb the peace have been heard lately. The Parihaka meetings have decreased in number, and the comparatively few assemblages have not been so numerously attended.