

application that it would be more advantageous to have a school of their own, where the children could attend freely without fear of being objected to.

A school has been established during the past year at Moeraki by the Otago Education Board, which enables the Native children at the settlement there to attend, much to the satisfaction of their parents, who have long desired to obtain that advantage for them, but while Matiaha Tiramorehu was alive he opposed the children being sent to school.

The Natives at the Taieri complained of the poor character of their reserve. Only a small part of it could be utilized, and that was nearly worn out by constant cultivation.

The bulk of the land is hilly, and is let to the Henley Company at a low rate of rent, from 2s. to 2s. 6d. per acre. At the time the company kept sheep they allowed the principal families a quarter of a sheep per week to provide them with meat.

The Natives at the settlement are very poor, as the land for cultivation is very limited, and they find a difficulty in supplementing their livelihood by other means.

During one season, before the people derived any rent from their land, one of the resident Natives opened a store, but was ultimately compelled to abandon it in consequence of the large credit the Natives obtained, by which he lost over £100. The Natives complain that they are now debarred from eeling in the Taieri River, in consequence of its being stocked with imported fish, and they are badly off for a fishing-place. They used to do eeling at a lagoon near the Waipouri Lake, but were turned away from there, and have nowhere to go now. They are very desirous that the lagoon should be secured as a fishing-place for them. Another matter they complain of is the heavy expense they are put to for medical attendance.

The general testimony obtained at all the settlements was the inability of the people to maintain themselves on the land; even at Waikouaiti, the most thriving of all the settlements, everyone who spoke on the subject stated that the land was insufficient to maintain them, and, such being the case there, where the soil was comparatively good, what must be the condition in other places where the people were not so fortunate.

Comparing the quantity of land set apart for Native purposes in the Southern provinces and Stewart Island with the number of persons in occupation of these lands, it would seem hardly possible that a livelihood cannot be obtained off the land; but when it is considered that 1,090 acres is all that is in cultivation by a population of 1,231 persons, it is not so incredible; moreover there is this to be considered, that the Natives are not experts as a rule as cultivators. In olden days, as soon as the inherent qualities of the soil were exhausted, they shifted their cultivations to another place; fertilising the land was not part of the process of Maori tillage. As matters are now, their cultivations are confined to the reserves, and the fertility of the land in occupation from constant cropping is exhausted. Another matter for consideration is that the land comprised within the reserves is not of a uniform character, and for the purpose of exemplifying this I have prepared a classified return (*vide* Schedule E.) of the character of the soil of the reserves in Canterbury and Otago, by which it will be seen, that of the area classified there is: Good, 13,138 acres and 12 perches; medium, 11,785 acres 2 roods 10 perches; inferior, 8,110 acres.

A large proportion of the land in the awards made by the Court in 1868 comes within the definition of medium and inferior. Attention therefore ought to be given to this point when considering the quantity owned by any of the Natives, as to whether the quality is good, as the land in some places for purposes of cultivation is worth three or four times as much as in others. For instance, take the original Kaiapoi Reserve: all through there is no land anywhere to compare with it; whereas a great deal of the 4,241 acres subsequently awarded to the Kaiapoi Natives by the Court as compensation for land apportioned to other Natives out of their reserve, is barely worth having, the character is so inferior. The same comparison could be made in regard to nearly all the reserves. The lands nearest in order of quality to Kaiapoi are Moeraki, the original reserves at Arowhenua, Waikouaiti, and Otago Heads; the remainder of the original reserves can only be classed as medium, and all the lands that have been added since as third rate.

The Natives at Waitaki complained of the poor land reserved for them. Three sections were set apart there in 1868, comprising an area of 489 acres 2 roods 10 perches; more than two-thirds of this area is stony and unfit for cultivation. The only piece of good land has been destroyed by the encroachment of the river, and but a few acres now remain that can be utilised. The people are very badly off for food-supplies in consequence, and, to make matters more trying for them, they cannot fish in the Waitaki for eels or whitebait, owing to that river being stocked with imported fish; and the runholders will not allow them to go over their country to catch woodhens or other birds in season. Owing to this and other circumstances they are compelled to lead a life of semi-starvation. The young people find employment during the busy season, but cannot obtain work all the year round, consequently the small amount they can earn is soon exhausted in paying their debts, and nothing is left to maintain their families with while they are out of work.

The Natives of Taumutu are very badly off, owing to the poor character of the land reserved for them. A large proportion of the original reserve made in 1848 is very poor, and all the land that has been added since is decidedly inferior.

The 700 acres allotted to the residents under "The Taumutu Commonage Act, 1883," is only fit for pasturage purposes, and a very small proportion is useful even for that.

At Wairewa (Little River) the Natives applied to have a fishery reserve made at the mouth of Lake Forsyth, to enable them to go there without fear of interruption from the European owners. At present they are indebted to the kind consideration of Mr. Buchanan, a neighbouring runholder, for permission to camp on his land when they go fishing at the mouth of the lake. They stated they were willing to submit to any restrictions the Government considered advisable to impose relative to opening the lake when necessary. All they desired to obtain was a piece of land they could camp on without fear of being disturbed,