

crops grown, neither have I been able to ascertain the quantity of wool produced from Native flocks.

There have been no charges of a serious character against Natives in this district during the past year, and the number of convictions for minor offences appears to be somewhat slightly below that for the previous one.

As this is my first year in charge of this district I am not in a position to say whether the general state of the Natives has improved or otherwise. To myself, as a new comer, the Natives appear to be rather improvident, taking little thought for the future, and waste much of their time and means in attending at Native Land Courts prosecuting claims to some block or other in which their interest, if any, may be of little value. In examining them as Trust Commissioner, the Natives often give as a reason for disposing of their lands that they require money to prosecute such claims, which I understand, in many instances, they simply bring forward on the chance of getting their names placed on the list of owners, no matter how small the share they expect to acquire may be, or however incommensurate with the time and expense spent over the matter.

I have, &c.,

A. TURNBULL,

Resident Magistrate.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

No. 6.

Mr. J. BOOTH, R.M., Gisborne, to the ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Gisborne, 11th July, 1892.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of number and date as per margin, directing me to furnish the usual annual report on the state of the Natives in this district for presentation to Parliament.

I regret that, owing to several weeks' absence from Gisborne on Resident Magistrate and Native Land Court duty, the sending of the report has been delayed.

I have the honour to state that since sending in my last yearly report everything has been going on as usual in the district. The crops throughout the district have been good, and now that so much bush-land has been taken up all who can and will work have constant employment, taking large bush-falling contracts in winter, and in summer shearing, and cutting and saving grass-seed. A considerable number of Natives are now owners of flocks of sheep, and are doing well; indeed, the great majority in the district are very well off; they dress well, and in the neighbourhood of Gisborne most of them drive their own buggies.

It is much to be regretted that, although most if not all of them could, if they would, afford to build comfortable weather-board houses, they prefer as a rule to live after the style of their fathers—the floors of the dwelling- and sleeping-houses being on a level with and sometimes lower than the ground outside. They sleep on mats or mattresses spread on the ground. In former times, when life and property were not safe in New Zealand, they were obliged of necessity to live in fortified pas, and living in this kind of building did not much matter, as the pas were necessarily built on high ground, and drainage thereby secured; but now that life and property are safe in every part of the country they prefer to live on the low, rich, and often swampy soil, to be near their cultivations. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that under these conditions the dwellings above described become hot-beds of typhoid fever, influenza, &c.

I am sorry to say that the past year has been very fatal to a great number of old people and young children. I am glad, however, to add that a doctor (Dr. Grant) subsidised by the Government has now taken up his residence on the East Coast, his head-quarters being at Waipiro. When I was up the coast a fortnight ago I was told by the Natives that he had been very successful in his treatment of several cases which were looked upon as being past hope. This will, I think, tend to make him popular, and perhaps induce the foolish people in cases of serious illness to apply to the doctor instead of going to their so-called Maori doctors, who kill more than they cure.

Some of the schools, owing to so much sickness, have had to be closed for a time; in two or more instances the European masters and members of their families have been laid up with fever, but none of the Europeans who have taken the proper remedies have died. The masters are most of them supplied by the Government with proper fever remedies, and these are administered where Natives will receive them; but it is most difficult to enforce a proper diet. A child, a week or two ago, who had been treated by one of the masters was recovering from fever; she cried for some of the food her parents were eating (pork and potatoes); they gave her some, although proper milk-diet had been supplied by the master: the next day she was dead. She was a bright little school-girl. The progress of the children in the schools has, I believe, been satisfactory.

The opening of a Board school at Awanui has to a certain extent interfered with the attendance at the Wai o Matatini school, three miles away, as all the European and half-caste children from Awanui, and several Native children from the immediate neighbourhood, now attend the Board school. Where there has been little or no fever the attendance at the schools has been up to the average.

I am pleased to say that the Natives on this coast, as a whole, have almost entirely given up drinking: it is very rarely now that a Native is brought up on a charge of drunkenness.

During the year ended 31st March I have held Resident Magistrate's Courts quarterly at Awanui and Tologa Bay, and every two months at Wairoa. Besides the ordinary Resident Magistrate's Court work at Gisborne, a Trust Commissioner's Court is held every Monday when I am not absent. I have also held Native Land Courts at Gisborne whenever I could spare time from other work. These Courts have been generally held for the purpose of hearing and disposing of succession claims.