

The Native population of this district has been considerably increased the last two years, by the return of absentees from other provinces. Scarcely a month passes without some returning. Some of them give me trouble about land disposed of under the Military Settlers' Settlement Act, but after a time resign themselves to the condition of things, and settle down with their relatives.

I have, &c.,

R. PARRIS,

Civil Commissioner.

The Under Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

### No. 9.

Mr. R. W. WOOD, R.M., Upper Wanganui, to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Native Office, Wanganui, 21st May, 1875.

I have the honor, as directed, to forward my annual report on the state of the Natives in my district. Upon the whole, I feel justified in reporting favourably as to "the state of Native feeling generally;" further progress having been made by the Natives during the past year (consequent upon a continued state of peace and quietness) in the road to civilization, contentment, and happiness. All feelings of hostility towards the European power are fast passing away, and a general determination to look to the law for redress of all imaginary wrongs and grievances and for the security of their rights has become the normal state of feeling amongst the Maori population of these parts, a feeling which may now be said to have spread over all the country.

There have been extra causes at work during the past year to excite and disturb the Maori mind, more particularly the all-absorbing question of the management of their landed estates, the increasing disposition of many to sell a portion of their lands to the Government having had its effect upon the whole Native population, sellers and non-sellers; and meetings are constantly being held to discuss the subject, and a determination come to to have their lands surveyed and put through the Court, so that the question of title may be ascertained and a definite policy pursued in respect of leasing and selling their lands, and such general administration of same adopted as may prove most advantageous to the race. A strong feeling is gaining ground as to the necessity of securing a large portion of the tribal inheritance as an estate in perpetuity to the descendants of the Maori people, and a good deal of opposition shown towards those chiefs and their followers who are going in extensively for land-selling, for fear that a reckless disposal of same should prevail and no provision be made for future generations.

Surveys are now being pushed on in all parts of the interior, and many disputed tracts of country will shortly be submitted to the Land Court for investigation and settlement, all opposition having been withdrawn by those who had expressed an intention of fighting out the question by a resort to arms, owing to the good advice given by Major Kemp and other loyal chiefs to submit all differences to the law for arbitrament.

Much agitation has transpired in the Tuhua district, where the Native title is much in dispute, owing to the disposition shown by the notable chief Mamaku to sell several tracts of land in that part, and his eagerness to push on the surveys in the interior, for which he has been called to account by many of the subordinate chiefs and others who are alarmed at the action taken by the old chief, who seems determined to throw open the interior for European settlement. Serious differences amongst the Tuhua Natives threatened more than once in connection with the surveys pushed on by Mamaku, and on one occasion a threatened disturbance was prevented by the timely and judicious interference of the Land Purchase Officers, backed up by the support and influence of Te Pikikotuku, Paiaka, and other Natives, who exerted themselves to maintain the peace.

Te Mamaku, an old chief of high rank and influence amongst the Natives, and well known to the Europeans in this province, is now a staunch adherent of the Government, and has lent his influence and active support—regardless of all opposition by the land leaguers—towards opening up the inland districts of the North Island to the occupation and settlement of the white man. The action taken by him will have its due effect over other chiefs and tribes, including those of Waikato and Maniapoto, and many will be induced to follow his example, knowing full well that the land monopoly hitherto existing cannot be maintained any longer as against the constant pressure both from without and within. One cannot, however, but sympathise with the feeling expressed by many, and anxiety shown to make provision for future generations, by securing an ample portion of the Maori lands as an inheritance for their children; and no doubt the Government will take care that ample provision is made for the Native population in this respect, and a paternal regard shown for their interests by setting apart large reserves out of purchased blocks as an estate in perpetuity for the Maori race.

Some dissatisfaction still exists among several of the river Natives and coast districts, consequent upon the action taken by Henry Matua, who has led them to believe that they have been victimized in their former sales of land to the Government, and has succeeded in setting them against our Courts (Land and Judicial); and the Maori Runanga is constantly at work, settling land disputes, and trying offences amongst the disaffected and disappointed members of the Maori community. On one occasion I found the Maori Runanga sitting at Parikino, in the large assembly house there, where I had been accustomed to hold my Court, and at a time when I had fixed a sitting to be held therein; and I at once adjourned my Court to the schoolhouse in the neighbourhood, with the concurrence of Hakaria, assessor and head chief of the settlement, although the Runanga offered to adjourn their proceedings till I had held my Court, which I declined to do, feeling they had stolen a march upon me, and that it would be derogatory to my position as a Queen's Magistrate to in any way submit to, or countenance their unlawful proceedings. I took care, however, to express my disapprobation of their conduct, particularly of the resident Natives, in no measured terms, and have since learnt that the action taken by me has met with the approval of the bulk of the natives. I think, however, that, at least in these parts, this movement will gradually die out, and that its staunch supporters will soon tire of their profitless employment. In some instances, where local differences about