

whaka-kotahitanga o nga iwi Maori o Niu Tireni." It needs scarcely be added that this is the main feature of the King movement.

I have, &c.,

F. E. HAMLIN, R.M.,

Native Officer.

The Under Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

### No. 33.

Mr. H. W. BRABANT, R.M., Opotiki, to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Opotiki, 20th May, 1876.

I have the honor to submit the following as my annual report on the Natives in the Opotiki District:—

#### 1. *State of Natives, Physical and Moral.*

During the latter half of last year there was little to remark on the physical condition of the Natives, but since the commencement of the current year a good deal of sickness has prevailed, probably some of it caused by insufficiency of food from failure of crops; but latterly an epidemic, said to be typhoid fever, has been running through the district, attacking many, and of which, up to this date, at least twenty have died. They have received medical attendance, medical comforts, &c., to the fullest extent practicable. In regard to their moral state, I find the number of criminal charges proved against Maoris at the Resident Magistrate's Court during the past year to be as follows:—Assault, 1; drunkenness, 3; larceny, 5; murder, 1. This last was the witchcraft murder, on which I made a special report to you. Of *quasi* criminal charges, one Native was charged with a breach of an Impounding Act; and one with lunacy (epileptic), who was sent to Auckland for treatment. These crimes are few in proportion to the population; and I believe that the slightly increased number, as compared with former years, is caused more by better police supervision than by any real increase of crime. Drunkenness still prevails at Native feasts, but, I venture to hope, to a less extent than last year.

#### 2. *Crops and Native Industries.*

You are aware that the Natives in this district are industrious agriculturists, growing not only crops for their own consumption, but also large quantities of wheat and maize for sale; it is not perhaps generally known to what an extent this is the case. I find from statistics supplied me by Native Assessors, and which I believe to be strictly correct, that the Whanau-a-Apanui and Whanauate-Hutu tribes, between Maraenui and Cape Runaway, having a population of less than 600 men, women, and children, grew last year 8,700 bushels of wheat, and 6,800 bushels of maize. The Whakatohea, and the various tribes of Natives living west of Opotiki on the coast, do not grow wheat, but are (especially the Whakatohea) still large producers of maize in proportion to their number. These, Sir, are people who are not uncommonly stated by Europeans to be idle, useless as settlers, and to depend chiefly for subsistence on Government aid. These statistics are for last year. The crops for this year are not at present all reaped. The wheat has been a partial failure, owing to the unusually wet summer; but the maize, kumara, &c., are reported to be above the average where not destroyed by water; but I fear considerable damage was done in the low-lying portions of the district by the greatest flood known for years, which occurred in February last.

#### 3. *Disposition towards Government; Political feeling, &c.*

I have little to report under this head, except that the coast Natives have, during the past year, lived in peace with the Europeans and with each other, and have readily and cheerfully submitted to the law and to the wishes of the Government. I think this district may fairly claim to equal, in the state of law and order existing among the Maori people, any Native district in the island; even the Urewera, the wild hill tribe, are becoming surely, if gradually, more civilized and amenable to law; the way in which they gave up the murderer Himiona to be tried by a Court of law, when they fully understood that Government insisted on it, laying aside all their own ideas and prejudices, speaks more on this subject than pages of writing could. I observe that the recent contest for the election of a Maori member for the House of Representatives created great interest amongst the Natives; for the first time they had explained to them, by electioneering agents, the fact that the contest in elections is not only a personal one between candidates, but is also one between the great parties in the House of Assembly to which the candidates severally belong. The Natives, I find, are gradually learning to understand and take an interest in our electoral system; and I fail to see that they are not able to exercise the franchise as intelligently as many of the European settlers. To one other matter I wish to draw your attention under this head; it is to the success of the arrangements (made before my appointment to the district) that the Ngatiira hapu of the Whakatohea should receive land and cultivate within the European settled district of Opotiki. These people have been, since my residence here, distinguished by their loyalty, industry, and good conduct, and have readily submitted to (what would be supposed to be to them) the irksome provisions of the Fencing, Highway, and Impounding Acts. This is no doubt partially owing to the superior character of their chief, Hira te Popo; but I venture to pass an opinion that this plan of mixing Native with European settlement might be advantageously extended.

#### 4. *Public Works.*

But few public works have been carried on in this district during the past year; the Ngatipukeko have done a little to their contract for the Te Teko road, and a party of the Urewera have been and are still working on the Whakatane Valley road.

#### 5. *Native Schools.*

The Native schools in this district continue to progress, and will be reported on separately by me.

I have, &c.,

HERBERT W. BRABANT,

Resident Magistrate.

The Hon. the Native Minister, Wellington.