

very marked difference, more especially in the inland districts, and I have constantly heard tourists expressing pleasure and surprise at the good behaviour of the Natives during the sittings of the Court, and also the respect shown to the law.

The Under Secretary, Native Department,
Wellington.

I have, &c.,
F. E. HAMLIN,
Resident Magistrate.

No. 18.

The Rev. J. W. STACK to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.

Report on the Canterbury Maoris for the Year ending the 30th June, 1877.

I AM glad to report that all traces of the fever, which proved so fatal last year, have passed away, and that the health of the Native community is restored.

Though still suffering from the effects of the strain put upon their limited resources, by their contributions to Mr. Taiaroa's fund for prosecuting their land claims in the English law-courts, the Natives generally are better off this year than they have been for some time past. This is owing partly to the high prices ruling in the produce and labour markets, and partly to an increase which has lately taken place in the rentals received from Europeans leasing their lands. The circumstances, however, of those who have no land to let, and who are too old to work, remain unaltered, and their support will continue to be a charge on the Charitable Relief Fund; but, in order to prevent the whole burden of it falling upon the fund, I have in most cases limited the period during which assistance is afforded to the winter months, because then even those who are best off amongst the Maoris have nothing to spare, and to withhold assistance at such a time would occasion much suffering.

In dress, food, and house accommodation, there is very little to distinguish the Maoris in the South Island from their European neighbours; but still there remain two great obstacles to their complete civilization, the one affecting their social relations, the other their moral character; the one being caused by the survival of many of their old communistic customs relating to property, and the other by their defective or blunted moral sense. The one checks industry by compelling the industrious to support the idle; the other promotes immorality by blinding the people to the enormity of vice. The individualization of the reserves is doing much to eradicate communism. It not only enables the Maori to do what he likes with his own, but it leads to the settlement of Europeans in the midst of the Natives, and to the consequent breaking down of many foolish Native customs. It is the moral difficulty which is likely to prove the greatest hindrance to the further progress of the race. In Maori society the vicious and the low-born associate on terms of perfect equality with the virtuous and the noble, and consequently the manners of the people are growing coarser, and their morals are being lowered day by day; their minds are becoming so familiarized with the details of vice that they see no impropriety in saying or doing before a woman or child of their own race what they would be ashamed to say or do before any respectable European; and under such circumstances the existence of innocence amongst their youth is an impossibility, and anything like refinement of feeling amongst the adults is of very rare occurrence. Still there are virtuous and honorable men and women amongst the Maoris, and the absence of refined feeling and a proper sense of self-respect it probably to be attributed, in a great measure, to the disruption of their social system by the adoption of the unfamiliar customs of a highly civilized race, and to the state of confusion and bewilderment into which they were thrown by the change. When the chief had learnt to smother his natural repugnance to accept an infamous slave as his equal, and had been brought to regard doing so as a virtuous act, it is hard for him to draw a distinction between the nature of the infamy attaching to his own slave and that attaching to the criminal—the slave of the law—and to know why what was right in the one case could be wrong in the other: to his mind ceremonial defilement was quite as shocking as moral, and he cannot yet see clearly the difference. The obliteration of class distinctions has fostered rudeness and coarseness of manners, and the poverty of the chiefs has compelled them to submit to all kinds of indignities to conciliate their old dependants, on whose voluntary services they rely for support: thus practices have developed which, however distasteful to the right-minded, are tolerated because they appear irremediable, and the punctilious *rangatira* Maori is fast degenerating into the rude and too often vicious vulgarian. We can only hope that education, when it becomes universal, may quicken the moral sense of the people, and that the growth of a comparatively wealthy class and a return to something like order in their social system may improve their manners, and put a stop to the unseemly fraternization of the virtuous with the vicious.

During the past year a new schoolroom and master's house have been erected at Little River, where about thirty children are in attendance. The school at Kaiapoi is shortly to be re-opened. In three other places in my district, the Natives have expressed a desire to have the means of instruction provided for their children.

A few weeks ago a number of Natives, under the leadership of Tamaiharoa their prophet, left Arowhenua for the Upper Waitaki, carrying with them their families and all their movable property. It is their intention to "squat" on any suitable piece of land they can find, and so to compel the Government to grant them more land. This course of action is due to the failure