

The Natives generally appear healthy and strong about Whakatane, Rangitaiki, Matata, and in the Urewera country; they have not been visited by any epidemic during the past year. The Torere, Te Kaha, and Raukokore Natives, however, have had a kind of low fever amongst them for the past two months, which has carried off a few of the children. Wiremu Kiugi has lost a daughter, and has a son who is not expected to live. These two children suffered from consumption. The Natives generally in this district are very much addicted to drink: this is the more apparent to me, as the Natives in the Kawhia and Raglan Districts were very sober. Were it not for the drunkenness of these Coast tribes, I feel sure they would be a wealthy section of their race.

Since I took over the magisterial duties of this district, I have had no reason to complain of the conduct of the Natives. Although at the time of the Native Land Court sittings here there were upwards of three hundred of them in the township during the whole of that time no Native was charged with drunkenness; but, after the decision of the Court was given, the party whose claim was not admitted caused a slight disturbance, which ended in two of the aggressors being brought before the Court. It is to be hoped next year I shall be in a position to report more favourably as to their drinking habits.

Disposition.

The whole of the tribes in this district, which extends from Whangaparaoa to Maketu on the Coast, and the Urewera country in the interior, are at all times willing to abide by our laws, the Urewera alone excepted—they are still inclined to be lawless, but they now appear to be improving in this respect. The rugged nature of their country affords them security from arrest, and I have no doubt many of them are emboldened by this fact to act in defiance of our laws. However, so far they have conducted themselves very well, and I trust even this hitherto lawless tribe will ere long be amenable to our laws, the same as the majority of the Natives of the district appear to be. So far as I have been able to judge, it is apparent that these Natives prefer to be governed by our laws than their own. I conclude this from the frequent appeals they make to the various Courts throughout the district: almost every Court-day there are one or more Native cases at each place where the Court sits, and invariably the decision of the Court is obeyed by the party in fault.

There is one thing which I think it right to mention here, and that is the adherence of a majority of the Natives of this district to Te Kooti's form of Church service. Te Meihana, Wiremu Kingi, and other principal chiefs of this district object to the people using Kooti's *karakia*; but they will not listen to their chiefs. I do not think the mere fact of their adhering to this form of worship indicates any desire on their part to act with hostility against the Government of the country, but it is simply a belief that Kooti is something more than a human being. Many Natives have visited Kooti lately to consult him with respect to cases of sickness amongst them. Kooti is represented as telling them "that it was no use their coming to him, as he was no god, but only a human being the same as themselves." He, however, enjoined them to adhere to his form of worship. The whole of the Urewera adopt Kooti's *karakia*, but they of course were a part of his troops when he was fighting against us. They have never laid aside his prayers, &c.

Of the various forms of worship in vogue amongst the Natives, I am of opinion that next, to that of our own Church, Te Kooti's is by far the most sensible. That used by the Waikato King Natives is simply nonsense, and I am happy to state is not in vogue on this coast.

I have no doubt, like everything new amongst Natives, this Church service will be the rage for a short time, after which its adherents will gradually dwindle away. I am rather surprised that the Whakatane Natives have adopted this form of prayer, as their reminiscences of Te Kooti can be anything but happy.

Crops.

The crops generally are very good. The Te Kaha people are the only ones who have grown wheat to any extent this year. They sold to one storekeeper eight hundred pounds' worth, the price given being 5s. per bushel. The maize crop throughout the district looks very well. At every settlement there are large cultivations of this grain. If the growers were more thrifty in their habits, they would be well off; but I regret to say there is a very pernicious habit amongst Natives generally here of living on their crops before they are even planted; consequently, by the time the harvest comes in, they have nothing to receive, as in the case of the £800 paid for the wheat at Te Kaha. The Natives received none of this, because they had drawn to the full extent upon it. It is the same with their maize crop: one storekeeper alone told me he had due to him £800 on the incoming maize crop at the Kaha. It is this system of anticipation which keeps the Natives so poor: it is useless attempting to persuade them to act otherwise. A Maori has no thought for the morrow so long as he can gratify his wishes of to-day. Natives have frequently admitted to me that my advice was good, but it was impossible for them to act on it.

Kumaras throughout the district are an extra good crop this season.

Native Schools.

There are five Native schools in this district in which instruction is at present given; the remainder are closed. These schools are at Whakatane, Torere, Omaio, Te Kaha, and Waiotahi. The latter is upon a different footing from the four first-named. I took the opportunity, when visiting Torere, Omaio, and Te Kaha, to look in at the different schools. I managed to do so in each case when the children were at their lessons. They seemed to take considerable interest in their books. I will say nothing further about the schools, as the Inspector, who is now examining them, will no doubt render a full report on the subject, but that the three schools which I visited seemed to be carefully conducted. The children appeared quite delighted at my visit; and I am of opinion that, if these schools were visited by the local authorities whenever they might be in the neighbourhood, it would have a good effect on the scholars.

Public Works.

The only public works which have been carried on in this district during the past year are the road from Whakatane to Te Teko and a portion of Te Kaha and Raukokore Road.