

The Natives generally during the past twelve months have conducted themselves in a quiet, orderly manner, and but four criminal cases in which Maoris were charged—all for assault or breach of the peace—were brought before me, none, however, being of a serious character.

There have been eight civil cases in the Resident Magistrate's Court between Maoris and Europeans, and one in which Maoris only were concerned.

The condition of the Natives remains much the same as regards their industrial pursuits as reported on by me last year, the chief difference being in the decreased amount of land placed under crop, as last year they were under the impression that a sitting of the Native Land Court would be held here, which they now appear to have given up all hopes of. A number of men belonging to hapus on the eastern and south-eastern shores of the lake have been employed by Mr. A. B. Wright, of the Survey Department, in constructing the road laid out by him last year between Taupo and Murimotu, and a branch of it from the Tongariro River to Tokaanu, and have been earning good wages. The formation of the road is completed as far as the Tongariro River, and the Tokaanu branch is now in course of construction.

In February a dispute occurred between the Tokaanu Natives and Mr. Wright, the Natives stating that they would prevent the road from being proceeded with any further. At Mr. Wright's request I attended a meeting between them at Tokaanu, at which the objections to the continuance of the road-work were finally withdrawn, having been, in my opinion, made in the first instance, more with a view of obtaining increased wages than with any serious intention of interfering with the progress of the road.

During the past year several surveys of large blocks of Native land at the southern end of Lake Taupo have been completed, notably those of Okahukura and Rangipo-Waiiau, each containing about 80,000 acres. These surveys, having been made on the application of the Native owners, who have hitherto strenuously opposed surveys of any description, furnish a proof that they are beginning to appreciate the utility of getting their lands passed through the Native Land Court, and of obtaining a definite title.

The health of the district has been generally good, very few cases of serious illness or deaths having occurred, the latter having been principally among children. The Natives are getting more and more in the habit, in any case of sickness, of applying at the Constabulary surgery for advice and medicine, and in consequence many cases are cured which, a few years ago, might have terminated fatally.

I have, &c.,

D. SCANNELL,

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

Resident Magistrate.

No. 9.

JAMES BOOTH, Esq., R.M., Gisborne, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Gisborne, 1st May, 1884.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Circular No. 3, of the 9th April, 1884; and I have much pleasure in reporting that the Natives in this district have during the past year been quiet and orderly, and that there has been less crime amongst them than for some years past.

The sitting of the Native Land Court at Gisborne for some months during the year has enabled the Natives to put a good deal of land through the Court, and many transactions in the way of sales and leases have—now that clear titles have been obtained—been satisfactorily completed. Whilst referring to the Native Land Court I think it right to call the attention of the Hon. the Native Minister to the fact that the sittings as at present held are indirectly the cause of immense loss in time and money to the Native applicants attending them. In this, as in many other districts, the Native owners of any given block of land are, in times of peace, spread over a large extent of country: for instance, at the late sitting of the Land Court here, many applicants came from distances ranging up to a hundred miles, and, as the claims of these applicants would be affected by original claims, by subdivisonal and succession claims, they were obliged to remain over nearly the whole sitting. It has been proved over and over that if an owner absents himself, trusting to his tribe to protect his interests, he stands a very poor chance of getting his fair share of land. Besides this loss of time and absence from their cultivations, there is the necessary cost for food, pasturing for horses, &c. During the sitting of the Court here there was little or no drunkenness, and yet the cost to each individual claimant under the circumstances I have mentioned must have been enormous. Many men, having been here for months, have been obliged to sell the land to which they had got a title, to pay expenses. The only remedy I can suggest in such cases as I have mentioned is that Courts should be held more frequently, and thus prevent an over-accumulation of work. If Courts could be held at stated periods, and the work could be got through at each sitting in one or two months, there would not be much hardship in the matter; but in the present state of things claimants must attend at ruinous cost, or run the risk of being left out in the cold; and if, being aggrieved, an application for rehearing is sent in, the natural reply is, "You ought to have been there, or have taken care that you were represented."

I have already stated that there is less crime than in past years. Early in the year, however, the Survey Department, in laying off and forming the Gisborne-Waiapu Road, had a