

applied for. The census just taken of the Ngaiterangi Tribe shows a slight decrease when compared with that of 1881; but when compared with the return of 1873 it will appear that the rapid falling-off has been arrested. It is not so evident to what this is to be attributed, as the social condition of the Natives is but little improved, except in the matter of sobriety. This last, however, must have its effect, and probably the schools which have been established are beginning to have some influence. In this district there are three schools in operation—at Maungatapu, at Huria, and at Paeroa. They have been fairly attended. The Natives are certainly taking a greater interest in them than they formerly did, and, I think, beginning to understand what has been so often told them, but so seldom believed, that educating the children is the one means by which the race can be saved from extinction. An application has been made to Government for another school, and there is some prospect of its being established. The great obstacle to the progress of the schools here is the annual exodus which takes place in autumn to the gum-fields in the Thames District.

I regret to report that the crops grown by Natives in this district have been almost a failure, owing to the drought setting in early in the season. They have for some years past ceased to grow produce for sale, but this year they will not have nearly enough for their own support. The result will be, I am told, that they will have to depend more on gum-digging; and some will probably wish to sell land to enable them to tide over the winter season.

The Maori King party have during the past year continued their efforts to keep up and increase their influence in the district, and to induce the Natives here to postpone the settling of titles and selling of land till Tawhiao's negotiations with the Home Government are finally concluded. The Natives seem, however, to be losing the confidence they professed last year in Tawhiao's scheme; and if, as seems likely, that chief should come to terms with the Government, it must, of course, collapse. Te Kooti visited Tauranga a few months since, in the course of the "progress" he and his followers were making through the country; but he met with a cool reception here. The Ngatimateika hapu had asked him to visit their settlement, and invited the other hapus to meet him; but the latter declined, with the result that Te Kooti went on to Waikato after only a few hours' stay. The Ngaiterangi Tribe lately petitioned the Native Minister to allow Tauranga to be constituted a separate district under the Native Committees Act. This was acceded to, and the new Committee has just been elected. The manner in which the tribe managed the election is, perhaps, worth recording. The Act provides merely that the Returning Officer shall give notice of a day on which the Native residents in the district shall elect a Committee not exceeding twelve persons. The Ngaiterangi, a fortnight before the day so appointed, held a meeting of the whole tribe, and apportioned the twelve seats amongst the various hapus in proportion to the population. Each of the hapu or hapus to whom a seat was apportioned elected their own member, and the tribe then appointed delegates to nominate the whole twelve before the Returning Officer on the day appointed. The twelve were elected without opposition, and the whole proceeding appears to have given great satisfaction. The plan of having each hapu represented certainly appears a good one, and the Natives consider that they have improved upon the mode of election as provided by Parliament.

During the past year in this district no Native has been charged with any serious crime, a few cases of drunkenness within the borough being the only charges made against Natives in the Police Court; and the Ngaiterangi have fully sustained their character as an orderly, law-abiding tribe.

### 2. *The Maketu-Rotorua District.*

In this district nothing of moment as regards the general health and social condition of the Natives has come under my notice. The census shows the population to be about stationary, neither increasing nor decreasing. The crops in Maketu have been, as in Tauranga, to a great extent a failure; those about Rotorua, however, have been somewhat better, plantations near the bush having, I am told, given good returns.

In the Maketu District some of the Natives talk of visiting the gum-fields in consequence, but about Rotorua the Natives have rents and other sources of income, and depend less on agricultural pursuits. As has been the rule of late years, Mr. Bush has taken the magisterial work at Maketu, and I at Rotorua. At the latter place the Natives have, as usual, given the Court a considerable amount of business, both on the criminal and civil side. Two charges of larceny and seven of drunkenness were heard against Natives; but no serious charge has been made against them, and as a people they can be stated to be well behaved and orderly.

The civil cases which the Court has had to decide have been principally disputes between Natives as to the ownership of animals and as to the division of moneys, the "spoils" of the tourist traffic. It is probable that in the future a number of these disputes will be referred to the Native Committee for settlement.

In the Maketu-Rotorua District the Land Courts and the management of their lands continue to interest the Natives more than any other topic, and here there does not appear to be any league to oppose the Government land-purchase operations.

Six Native schools continue in operation, with generally a good and, in some cases, an increasing attendance. New schools are shortly to be erected at Ranguiru, about ten miles from Maketu, and at Te Ngae, about seven miles from Ohinemutu. Others are talked of, and throughout the district the Natives are taking more interest in the question of education.