

population in my district has been holding its own. I think this may be considered highly satisfactory.

I am of opinion that the number being maintained is due, to a great extent, to the following causes: The absence of any serious epidemic: the fact that the Natives are more settled in their minds *re* land matters, large tracts of land having been dealt with by the Native Land Court, so that they have been able to lease unrequired portions to European tenants at fair rentals; from this source they have in many cases good incomes: they live in better houses, have more comfortable homes and surroundings, are better fed and clothed, and are decidedly more temperate in their habits as to drinking.

As the return shows, they possess large flocks of sheep, and many cattle and pigs; their cultivations, however, are not extensive. Their moral condition is much improved; in short, I rejoice to be able to say that, on the whole, they are, comparatively with the past, more "healthy, wealthy, and wise."

Many still suffer from pulmonic complaints, but not so much as formerly.

I regret to say they do not yet appear to see the importance of educating their children; an improvement in this direction is much to be desired.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT WARD,

Enumerator.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

No. 15.

Mr. W. J. BUTLER, Whanganui, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Whanganui, 14th May, 1886.

In compliance with the instructions contained in your circular-letter of the 30th December, 1885, I have the honour to forward the accompanying return of the Maori and half-caste population residing in the Counties of Whanganui and Waitotara.

Comparing this return with that of the year 1881, there would appear to be a heavy falling-off of the population; but, although there has, no doubt, been an excess of deaths over births among the Maoris of this district, the decrease has not been nearly so large as it appears to be by a comparison of the returns, and the discrepancy may be attributed mainly to the facts—

1. That the boundaries of the census district of 1881 and the district as at present constituted are not coterminous.
2. That a considerable number of the Maoris usually residing on the Whanganui River were absent at Parihaka, Taupo, and other places during the time the census was being taken.

In addition to the facts abovementioned, I think it may be taken for granted that the present return is more accurate than any previous ones, there having hitherto been serious obstacles in the way of securing a correct enumeration, which did not present themselves when the present census was taken, the result of which has been that the name of each individual appears on the roll, whereas, on previous occasions, only an approximate estimate of the Maori population has been secured.

There has been no serious disease or epidemic among the Maoris, so far as I can learn. Those living in the interior are in a state of extreme poverty, their supplies of food having been exhausted by the large meetings held at Poutu, last year, and at other places; and, until the interior of the country is settled by a European population, there is little hope of any improvement in the condition of those Maoris who have hitherto lived in isolation and held themselves aloof from any Europeans. However, during the last few months there appears to be a desire on the part of the inland tribes to become friendly, as evidenced by the fact that they have recently come down the Whanganui River for the purpose of prosecuting their land claims in the Native Land Court, and have offered a large block of land for sale to the Government, excepting therefrom large reserves, which will, in the not far distant future, be of considerable value to the owners.

There still remains latent in the minds of a small section of the Upper Whanganui and Tuhua tribes a relic of Hauhauism; however, I am of opinion that when they are afforded greater facilities for intercourse with Europeans these slight traces of fanaticism will rapidly disappear. Many of them are already evincing a desire to see the country opened up by roads and railways, and the establishment of a Native school at one of the largest settlements in or near the Tuhua country would have a most beneficial effect on the minds of Maoris, many of whom have not visited European settlements for years.

The establishment of a trade by a small steamer capable of navigating the river at all seasons would be of great benefit to the Maoris, as it would enable them to reach European settlements with far greater ease and facility than at present, and would induce them to cultivate products of various kinds which the difficulties of reaching market now discourage them from, but which would be of mutual advantage to both races if vigorously prosecuted.

I regret to report that the drinking habits of the Natives are not abating to such an extent as might have been expected from the laudable exertions of the disinterested persons of both races who have been labouring on their behalf.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

W. J. BUTLER.