

The industrial stimulus that encouraged the Natives to vie with the Europeans in the early days consequent on the demand for produce has diminished year by year, until little attention is paid to agricultural pursuits, the prevailing practice being to let their land, although the rent they receive is but a small proportion of what they might obtain by working the soil themselves, and goes but a little way towards providing the necessaries of life, owing to the area owned by each Native being too small to produce a sufficient sum for the purpose. In former years they owned a good many horses, cattle, and pigs; but they have been compelled, owing to the want of room, to give up breeding these animals.

The practice of letting their land is not objectionable when they have plenty to spare for the purpose; but in many cases they are driven to let the small area they have, to obtain money to relieve themselves from some pressing embarrassment, and when once the system is commenced they find it difficult to regain possession, as other debts have accumulated which they have no means of liquidating, and a fresh advance of rent has to be obtained to gain relief from the pressure they are subjected to.

At Kaiapoi the condition of affairs is very unsatisfactory through this cause. It is quite a common practice there for the Natives to draw their rents many years in advance, and expend the whole sum in liquidating pressing claims on them; the result of this is that they have no means left to live on, and how they manage to exist is a most puzzling problem to all who know anything of their affairs.

A stranger or a casual observer passing through their settlement, judging by the appearance of the people and the neat-looking houses along the road-side, would conclude that the occupants were in a thriving condition, but the reverse is the true state of the case, and the same false impression may be formed at other settlements, as to the exact condition of the people. The matter is self-evident, to any person who will take the trouble to consider the question, that it is quite impossible under the foregoing circumstances for people to thrive, and it is a matter of surprise under such circumstances that they can obtain credit from the tradesmen for the necessaries of life.

The young men are able to supplement their means of livelihood by obtaining work from the settlers during shearing and harvesting, but a large number of the people are incapacitated for hard work, either from age, ill-health, or inexperience. These people have to be maintained somehow, but who contributes to their support is a problem that is not easily solved. The younger men and the tradesmen appear to be the only means of support they have, coupled with the limited amounts received by way of rent from such properties on which the rent has not been hypothecated.

The settlement of the country by the Europeans in the early days was looked on with considerable satisfaction by the Natives in the South Island, as it relieved them from the constant dread of hostile attack from the northern Natives; but long experience has proved to them that the colonization of the country is not an unmixed blessing, as it has deprived them of all their privileges and forced them to adopt a mode of life unsuited to their former habits, and under circumstances that keep them in a chronic state of poverty. Formerly they could obtain readily all the food and clothing they required; now they are obliged on scanty means to eke out a precarious livelihood; while the Europeans, who have possessed themselves of the territory that was once theirs, are living in affluent circumstances as compared with themselves. It is no wonder, therefore, that they feel disappointed and dissatisfied with their lot.

Notwithstanding the precarious nature of the livelihood experienced by the Natives it is to their credit to state that there are no absolute cases of destitution, the aged and incapable being cared for out of the scanty means they possess; but this state of affairs cannot be expected to continue, as every year makes it more difficult for the able-bodied to obtain a livelihood. It is advisable, therefore, that some means should be devised for making other provision for the aged and indigent.

The aid contributed by the Government in former years has only been of partial benefit to the community at large, as the succour afforded has been mainly confined to the Natives residing in the Canterbury Province, and chiefly amongst the residents of Kaiapoi and the Peninsula.

The medical aid afforded the Natives has also been of a partial character, many of the settlements not participating in the advantage.

This was a matter the Natives also desired should be brought before the Government, as many of them complained of the heavy expense they were put to in obtaining medical aid in cases of illness, from the principal towns.

At Waikouaiti it was stated that it cost from £5 5s. to £10 10s. a visit, to obtain a doctor from Dunedin, and £3 3s. from Palmerston. At Purakaunui it cost from £2 10s. to £5 to obtain a doctor from Dunedin, and from £3 to £6 at Otago Heads. At Moeraki also the Natives complained of the heavy expense they were put to in obtaining medical aid. Complaint was made at Oraka (Colac Bay) that the salary of the doctor (who resides at Riverton) had been reduced, consequently it was very difficult to obtain his services. At Temuka the Natives applied that a doctor should be appointed on their behalf; they had not had the advantage of a doctor for many years, during which period it had cost them a good deal of money for medical attendance.

Another concession they desired to obtain was a school for their children. During the lifetime of the elder men they had opposed the erection of a school at the settlement, because they were of opinion it would militate against their claims if a school was established; but these ideas no longer prevail, and the people are very desirous that a school should be granted them.

Some of their children had attended the English school at the Temuka Township, but the European parents objected to them, because it was alleged they were not cleanly.

Unfavourable allusion had also been made in the newspapers relative to the Native children, which caused annoyance to the parents. This led to the most of them being kept away.

The Natives expressed a strong desire to have a school erected at their settlement, and said they would provide a site for it if Government would consent. They admitted that the distance was not great between their settlement and Temuka Township, but they urged in support of their