

No. 3.

G. T. WILKINSON, Esq., Native Agent, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Native Office, Otorohanga, 10th June, 1891.

In accordance with request contained in your Circular No. 1, of the 12th ultimo, I have the honour to forward herewith my annual report on the state of the Natives in my districts.

I have, &c.,

GEO. T. WILKINSON,

Government Native Agent and Land-purchase Officer.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

WAIKATO, WAIPA (KING-COUNTRY), AND THAMES.

Health.

During the past year the health of the Natives in my districts has not been so good as in former years. There has been a slight epidemic of low fever at some of the settlements; and at Raglan, in November last, several Natives were attacked with typhoid fever, and, although they were carefully attended to by Mr. Bay, the Government medical officer for Natives in that district, three of them, all young people, died. Death has also been busy with the Native pensioners during the past year, no less than five having died since I sent in my last report; they were all more or less aged people. The death of one of them—namely, Hone Wetere, of Kawhia, was the result of an accident. He was thrown out of his buggy when driving from Alexandra to Kawhia, and received injuries which resulted in his death very shortly afterwards. Below are the names of the pensioners who have died during the past year, with the dates of their respective deaths, and the amount of yearly pension that each was in receipt of at the time of his death: Hauauru Poutama, 23rd August, 1890, £100; Hemi Matini, 12th November, 1890, £15; Ratima te Whakaete, 8th December, 1890, £20; Hone Wetere, 30th December, 1890, £15; Hakiriwhi Purewa, 31st March, 1891, £20. The greatest chief, and the most important person of them all from a Maori point of view, was Hauauru Poutama. He was connected with the great tribes Ngatimaniapoto, Ngatiraukawa, Waikato, and Ngatihaua. He would be about sixty-eight years of age at the time of his death. He was a most genial, kind-hearted man, and, though he was an avowed supporter of Tawhiao, he never identified himself with any of the acts of lawlessness and obstruction to progress and civilisation that so many of Tawhiao's followers are often found connected with. He was a genuine Maori rangatira of the old school, of whom there are few remaining, and of which the present generation of Maoris does not produce any. Hemi Matini was a chief of the Ngatihourua Tribe, and lived at Waitetuna, near Raglan. He was related to the late well-known and loyal chief, Wiremu Nero (William Naylor), of Raglan. Ratima te Whakaete was an old Native of the Ngatinaho hapu of Waikato. He was uncle to the well-known Major Te Wheoro. Those who took part in the Waikato war in the years 1863–64 will not fail to remember the pleasant face and burly form of Sergeant Ratima, who was in charge of the commissariat canoes that were manned by Natives, and that used to convey stores up the Waikato and Waipa Rivers for the large number of soldiers that were then living at Te Awamutu and the numerous military camps on the banks of the above-mentioned rivers. Hone Wetere was a chief of the Ngatihikairo Tribe, of Kawhia, and, although not their head chief, he was a man of considerable importance. Hakiriwhi Purewa (commonly called “Hargreaves”) was well-known to the European settlers living in the vicinity of Hamilton and Cambridge. He belonged to the Ngatihaua Tribe, and at one time had considerable influence with his people; but with increasing years he had given way to younger and more energetic men in the management of the affairs of the tribe.

Social Position.

With regard to the social position of the Natives, more especially those in the Upper Waipa and King-country, there is not much change since my last report, though I think I am justified in saying that they are gradually moving onward. The absence of much European settlement in their midst is in a measure the cause of their not making more rapid progress in civilisation. Their record for temperance still holds good, and crime is very rare amongst them. Some are going in largely for sheep-rearing (the last census gave over 12,000 sheep in the King-country owned by Maoris and half-castes); others are erecting small wooden cottages for themselves and families, which, although they are not of a very pretentious kind, serves to show that they are advancing in civilisation, when they discard their Maori whares for the wooden house of the pakeha. They are also acquiring waggons, double-furrow ploughs, mowing-machines, and other improved agricultural implements. The possession, however, of the first-named, and the almost total absence of roads throughout their districts, now proves to them how unwisely they have acted in years gone by in objecting to Government making roads for them when it was prepared to do so.

Resumé of the Year.

Hardly a year passes without something of a more or less startling nature occurring within the Waikato and King-country district, which is to be accounted for by the fact that, apart from its being one of the most populous Native districts in the North Island, there are to be found within its borders supporters of Tawhiao, Te Whiti, and Te Kooti—all of whom are more or less disturbing elements—although the latter much less so than the two former. There is no doubt that supporting the two former means, to a great extent, opposition to the Government and to laws made by Europeans, according to the frame of mind in which their supporters happen to be in at the time, and the influence and excitement they may be labouring under; and occasionally it takes the form of openly breaking and defying the law and disturbing the peace of the district. Instances of this have occurred during the past year. In October last a Native named Kerei Kaihau, known as