

## 7. TARANAKI, ETC.

SIR,—

Hawera, 29th May, 1906.

I have the honour to inform you that, in accordance with instructions contained in your letter of the 12th February last, I now forward you the summary of the results of the Native census in the Counties of Clifton, Taranaki, Egmont, Hawera, Stratford, and Patea.

Considerable difficulties have been experienced by some of the sub-enumerators in locating portions of the Native population in these counties, as, owing to the almost total failure of the potato-crop, very many Natives have been absent from their settlements gathering karaka-berries and getting other food from the bush for the coming winter.

It is generally conceded by those in this district who are most qualified to judge that the Maoris are rapidly decreasing in numbers, and, although the present enumeration shows an increase of nearly five hundred, still, considering the difficulties in the way of getting a correct estimate of the Native population, I am of opinion that the Maoris in this locality are fast dying out, and the percentage of deaths over births is considerable. In one small settlement visited, out of ten married couples there has not been one single birth, and yet they had been married for a number of years.

I am not aware, nor have my sub-enumerators advised me, of any epidemic or sporadic disease in any of the settlements visited during the taking of the census, but it is a regrettable fact that when any sickness does occur amongst them they generally call in the assistance of a *tohunga*, a European medical man being seldom sent for until too late. This, I think, may be ascribed more to the fact that most of the settlements are distant from the towns where European doctors are to be found, and, the roads being bad to most of the settlements, heavy fees are charged by the profession, and, although there is a fairly large Native population residing between the Waitotara and Stoney Rivers, I am not aware of any medical man in that district subsidised by the Government to render aid to sick Maoris. There is little doubt that a small Native *hostelry* built in Hawera (as most central), where sick Natives could be brought from the outlying settlements in order to receive medical treatment, would induce Natives to abandon the *tohunga*, and would probably be the means of saving many lives.

The influence of Parihaka is still very strong among certain of the Natives on this coast. Meetings are still held every month, and twice a year (June and December) large numbers of Natives travel from up and down the coast to hear the latest prophecies of Tohu and Te Whiti. These visitors carry with them contributions of either food or money, and consequently exhaust their own resources for several months. Houses, some of them costing several hundreds of pounds, have been built at Parihaka by many of these regular visitors, and these are only used on the occasions of the periodical visits. It is generally understood that there is a reserve fund of cash at Parihaka, and when in conversation with the Natives there, it did not seem to me that there was any anxiety amongst them on account of the failure of the potato-crop. They remarked, "There was plenty of flour and rice to be bought," and "the *atua* would see they did not starve."

During the last few years a number of the younger men have taken to dairying, and with the assistance of Europeans have in many instances done very well. (The European assistance is purely the pecuniary part, providing them with cows and an advance in money.) Those who have undertaken it seem to realise there is money in it.

It is a noticeable fact that the Natives are quite abandoning the old *toetoe* and *raupo* whare and are building wooden houses, even the cooking-houses are frequently roofed in with iron.

Drunkenness amongst the Natives has greatly decreased, and alcoholic liquor is now never seen at a *tangi*. Whether this is to be attributed to the influence of the Maori Council or to the Native becoming more thrifty I am not prepared to say.

Generally summarising the position and the condition of the Native population in this district, I should say that, although they are decreasing in numbers, the remainder are becoming more thrifty, and anxious to emulate European manners and customs. There is very little individual wealth, but as nearly the whole of the population are beneficiaries of the West Coast Reserves, they receive their rents regularly every six months from the Public Trustee, whereas before this arrangement was made the rent for any land leased was taken by the head men of the *hapu*, and the others benefited nothing. Of course, there are a few malcontents who are antagonistic to the jurisdiction of the Public Trustee with regard to these lands, but these would only number about 1 per cent., and are mostly half-castes, who, having no children of their own, would like the inalienability of the land removed so that they could immediately realise on it. I feel assured that there is no better method of administering these West Coast reserves than the present one.

There are many matters pertaining to the welfare of the Native race that come well within the scope of the Maori Councils Act, but the influence of Parihaka is so strong that the best and most influential Natives will, unfortunately, take no part in the formation of the Councils.

I attach herewith extracts from reports of sub-enumerators.

The sub-enumerator for Clifton and Taranaki Counties states,—

I do not find any serious disease or epidemic having visited the Maoris of this district. I find that many of them die simply owing to the want of medical aid. Owing to their poverty they are not in a position to pay the fees charged by the doctors. They also complain about the Native doctors, who are flying around the country, doing (as they consider) no apparent good with regard to their health. I find in my knowledge, based upon over forty years' connection with the Natives, that they are decreasing visibly—I am positive the death-rate far exceeds the birth-rate.

The sub-enumerator, Upper Clifton County, states,—

From inquiries I find that there has been nothing serious in the way of sickness among the Natives, deaths being principally among the children. I have no hesitation in saying they are decreasing. Another remarkable thing you will observe is the proportion of males to females, which is about two to one.