

*Eketahuna.*

From inquiries made by me, and from my own personal knowledge, the Maoris in the Eketahuna County are decreasing, several Natives having died during the past four years at Hamua, whilst only one child has been born in the same period. The Maoris of Hamua are not living in the usual Native whares, but in wooden houses built in European style. They appear to be in good health as a whole, and to have to a great extent adopted European habits and dress, especially the male portion. The children are sent to the Hamua State school, and appear to hold their own in the various standards.

Some of the young men, I notice, are frequently employed by Europeans as farm labourers, and give satisfaction. All who are able during shearing-time seek employment as shearers. In a number of instances they are preferred to Europeans.

The Natives at Hamua are very temperate, and allow no liquor to be taken to their homes.

*Mauriceville.*

There are very few Maoris in the Mauriceville County, the only ones being at Hastwell. There has been no increase during the past five years, and there have been no deaths. All dress in European clothing, and to a certain extent have adopted European habits and furniture. One house contains a piano, one of the children being taught music.

*Masterton.*

There is a considerable increase in the number of young children. There is no epidemic among them, but a few are suffering from asthma.

The maize-crop has been ruined by early frosts, and will not ripen.

## 10. HUTT.

Wellington, 30th April, 1906.

SIR,—

I have the honour to forward herewith the result of the census of the Maori population in the Hutt County. I have again to record an increase, being due partly to the large number of children, of which there are eighty-four under fifteen years of age, as against seventy-one when the last census was taken in 1901. It was quite a pleasure to see so many large families of young, healthy, well-grown children. (Several of the known residents were on visits at Otaki and elsewhere, and there was an influx of a number of Natives from other districts who were attending the Native Land Court, which commenced its sittings in Wellington in the first week in April.) The total number now returned is 288, being an apparent though not a real increase of twenty-four.

The sub-enumerators report the general health of the Maoris in this county to be good. There has been no epidemic amongst them. Two of their old chiefs who were the connecting-links with their past history, and the well-known assessor, Wi Neera te Kanae, have passed away, leaving no one, I fear, of like influence to fill their places.

Fortunately for some of the Maoris of the Porirua and Hutt Districts, they are in the receipt of small yearly sums from the proceeds of their interests in the Nelson and Wellington "tenths" and the rents of small pieces of land. Some of the Natives of Hongoeka and Porirua supplement this by working for the European settlers. Possibly the failure of the potato-crop and consequent want may infuse a little more energy into the Maoris generally, and cause them to be more keen in looking for work—want being a hard taskmaster. It is to be hoped that this will induce the Maori to grow other vegetables besides potatoes, such as carrots, parsnips, swedes, cabbages, brocoli, silver-beet, more extensively of marrows and pumpkins, and kumara and taro in the warmer portions of the colony.

There is one exception, however, that I must mention, being the crop grown by a half-caste farmer at Pukerua, who has some three hundred sheep on his farm, from which he sold over 100 pounds' worth of wool, besides selling wethers at 15s. a piece. He is a most progressive man, and, considering that he has only been in occupation of his present holding some four years, he has done very well indeed. He has a nice roomy house (built of wood), he evidently believes in keeping the plough going, had a nice area down on sown grasses, wire fences well set up. Over two acres of freshly ploughed land had been put down in potatoes: the portion that had been planted with Derwents was a failure owing to the potato-blight. The remaining portion of the crop, consisting of two other distinct varieties, had been taken up and stored in what to me was quite a new and certainly a most effective way, instead of being stored in a shed or pit: Corner-posts, 17 ft. apart one way and 5 ft. the other, were sunk into the ground; on these a frame was built, length about 17 ft., width 5 ft., 2½ ft. deep, height above ground 4 ft. The bottom of the frame was floored with slabs some 2 in. apart; this was then covered with an inch or so of manuka scrub to prevent the potatoes falling through. The sides and ends were enclosed by rails or battens nailed to the corner posts so as to enclose more manuka scrub, which was wattled in with a stay or two in the middle, let into the ground for extra stability and support to the structure. The potatoes were then stored therein, those that were selected for seed being placed in kits, and the whole covered over with about six inches of loose fern. The explanation given was that the potatoes did not heat, and, being fully exposed to wind and air, no matter how heavy the rain they soon dried. My informant told me that he had seen potatoes so stored at Parihaka in June last, and that they were quite sound then. A ton and a half of the potatoes that I saw so stored have since been sold for £15 per ton. I examined these potatoes, and found them to be quite sound. From their appearance I should say that one of the two varieties so stored was very like the Dakota Red, which, I have heard, is a sturdy grower and a good blight-resister. I have been informed on very