

Aboriginal Reserve at Durundur.

THE following is the report, in a slightly abbreviated form, of the trustees of the reserve at Durundur for aboriginals.

R. J. SMITH.

HENRY WOOD.

FRANK V. NICHOLSON.

1. The number of aboriginals about our district who derive benefit from this reserve is decreasing. A few of the aged men and women have died since we last addressed you, and the old people alive are prolonging a miserable and precarious existence. There are only a few children born, and those that have been born are chiefly half-castes. The total number of natives in the neighbourhood of this reserve is about forty, having an equal proportion of sexes.

2. The natives do not reside for any length of time on this reserve. They visit it occasionally, and generally for the purpose of meeting surrounding tribes. Their gatherings are for no useful purpose, but merely for settling some trivial disputes and for hunting and enjoying themselves. These meetings being ended, the natives disperse to their own localities and resume their usual pursuits. Those in our neighbourhood work principally in the parishes of Kilcoy, Durundur, Neurum Creek, and Caboolture, and are employed, as we have before described to you, in falling scrub, ring-barking trees, burning off timber, and all employment incident to the settlement of country. In return for their oftentimes arduous labour they are but poorly remunerated, and in some cases we have known their payment has been altogether inadequate.

3. With the design of bettering the condition of the Caboolture and Durundur natives, we last year purchased a sailing boat for them. It is used for the purpose of fishing in Bribie Passage and Deception Bay, and the natives retail the catch generally as smoked fish, and have made themselves—particularly in winter—a little more comfortable with the proceeds. The boat, which is a serviceable one, and which fitted out cost about £20, bears the names of the trustees, and is committed to the care of the police stationed at Caboolture.

4. The late tenant of the reserve paddock was Mr. J. P. Jost, of Grandchester, who took the paddock for twelve months—from 1st September, 1881, to 1st September last. His lease expiring, the whole reserve is now let to the Chief Commissioner of Police. The late tenant's rent was £50 per annum, and the new tenant, in consideration of getting 400 acres more land in his tenancy, will pay £80 per annum.

5. Considerable annoyance and loss has been occasioned us by ill-disposed people in the neighbourhood of the reserve, who have taken up our fences, trespassed on the property, stolen our padlock, and made themselves otherwise disagreeable. We anticipate that this

stolen our padlock, and made themselves otherwise disagreeable. We anticipate that this gratuitous trouble will now come to an end.

6. The small herd of cattle owned by the natives now numbers twenty-one. They were lately mustered, branded, and counted at Durundur station. They are now placed at agistment on another property near the reserve, owned by Mr. John Simpson, of Caboolture. We thought this step necessary, because we found that, from causes which we could guess at but could not ascertain, we did not get a proper increase from the cows. We have sold lately, for the natives, from this small herd, one barren fat cow, to the Co-operative Butchering Company, of Brisbane, for £4 10s., and two store steers for 50s. each, to Andrew Gordon, Esq.

7. We have to acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of a sufficient supply of good blankets, which were given to the natives on or about 24th May last.

8. With reference to a recent notice by the Government, announcing that half-caste children would be taken care of in an orphanage, we have to say that, having pointed out to the native mothers, so far as we are able, the advantage of placing their children in such an institution, we have found that in all cases, as yet, the mothers will not consent to part with their children.

9. This reserve having been in existence for five years we are now in a position to say, with some degree of certainty, that the original idea and hope that the natives would make a permanent home on the reserve must be finally abandoned. The true position of the reservation is that it is a piece of land the income of which is dedicated to the use, benefit, and welfare of the natives. We are sure that they will never settle on the land or make it their temporary home, and we see plainly that, in spite of any effort or advice to the contrary, the natives are without ambition or desire to live in any other way than as a nomadic race. Any restraint or persuasion to change, or even to modify their habits of life, is only irksome and troublesome to them. We shall, therefore, continue, as we have hitherto done, to regard them as an unfortunate and short-lived people and to extend to them such help and consideration as circumstances will allow.—We have, &c.