

INSPECTORS' REPORT ON SCHOOLS IN THE WAIKATO DISTRICT.

Education Office,

March 31st, 1860.

SIR,—

In accordance with the wishes of His Excellency the Governor conveyed in your letter of 16th January last, "that we should co-operate with his Honor Chief Justice Arney and Captain Haultain in the inspection of Native Schools receiving aid from Government, under the 'Native Schools Act, 1858,'" we beg to state that we have visited the schools mentioned in the margin, and have now the honor to submit our report "upon the attainments and progress of the scholars, the nature of the instruction given in the schools, the food and clothing, cleanliness and health of the scholars, the state of the school-buildings, and generally upon the discipline, management, and efficiency of these schools."

We may be allowed to preface our report with a few general remarks, derived from our own independent observation.

That the Native race is capable of, and has already made great intellectual advancement, is a statement which few can gainsay. They are a people gifted by nature with those attributes which materially assist in intellectual development, namely, a quick perception, a powerful memory, great docility and patience. With such adjuncts towards improvement, very marked progress might, and in some cases has, already been made. But the great drawback to their advancement is their low social condition. Their improvement in this respect is by no means commensurate with their intellectual progress. The primary steps for effecting so desirable a reformation should most properly be made in the Native schools, but our experience compels us to state that, with two exceptions which have come under our notice, this attempt has not been made, or, if made, has proved unsuccessful. High mental culture, we conceive, should not be the object of these institutions, the benefit of which must, to a certain extent, be very limited, but, through their agency, a more universal good might be effected by training the children to observe habits of personal cleanliness and decency—habits which contribute so effectually to promote domestic comfort and social improvement.

To effect so desirable an object, a system different from that which is now pursued must be adopted. But a difficulty presents itself at the very threshold. Through what agency is this object to be effected? We desire that it may not be supposed that we wish to depreciate the services of the Missionaries,—the sacrifices they have already made in endeavouring to improve the Native race, and also in the cause of education, bear ample testimony to their sincerity and zeal; but it appears more than probable that, on the demise of those at present so engaged, few, if any Europeans will be found to undertake an office which presents so many discouraging aspects; and that the work of education must either wholly cease or devolve upon the Natives themselves, who already manifest a growing interest in the cause. In proof of this latter assertion, we may state that, within our own knowledge, there are already nine schools in existence, wholly and absolutely supported by the Natives. Many young men are now being educated for the combined office of pastor and teacher. The favourable issue of this experiment we have some reason to doubt. A tendency to lapse into Maori habits still lurks within them, nor have they that sufficient amount of moral courage to enable them single-handed to combat against customs almost honoured for their antiquity. The starting-point for the improvement of the Maori race must begin with the laying aside of many lazy, dirty habits, to which even the best educated among them are to a certain extent wedded. That a Native teacher therefore could *per se* overcome an opposition of so formidable a character, and combat against prejudices to which he himself and those among whom he associates so naturally incline, seems to be expecting too much. Again, we cannot suppose that Native teachers who have themselves just barely acquired the *prima elementa*, can efficiently communicate knowledge, the stock of information upon which they draw being so very limited, while their method of communicating it must, both from inexperience and ignorance of better systems, be defective. Viewing the matter in the above light, and concluding from the present aspect of affairs that the education of the Native race, if followed up, must be committed to Native teachers, we cannot forbear expressing our opinion that, unless a remedy be devised, the attempt to educate or improve the Native population must prove a failure. We might here be allowed to suggest what we conceive would, in a great measure, tend to counteract the ill-success we anticipate. We refer, first, to the appointment of a paid and permanent Inspector of Schools; secondly, believing, as we do, that the formation of habits of cleanliness, decency, and order, is most essential in the proper training of Natives, we would recommend that in every Native institution the services of a European matron should be secured, whose duty it should be in an especial manner to exercise the strictest supervision for the attainment of so desirable an object. It should be the duty of the Inspector to organize new schools, rectify abuses, introduce better systems of teaching, see that the public money was properly expended, and, in short, exercise that vigilance which is requisite for the efficient working of any important measure. The Natives themselves generally, we feel assured, would receive with gratitude such a boon from the Government, and the local managers of the schools would find their hands strengthened and the cause of education prospering under such co-operation on the part of Government.

In the hope that it may not be considered we wish to outstep the limits of the office assigned to us, we would venture to make one suggestion. We observed in some of the schools inspected by us that but a portion of the grant paid by Government for their maintenance, to the general manager or central Committee, was expended on them, while the balance was devoted to the support of more favoured schools, situate in or near the City of Auckland. We cannot forbear exclaiming against the

Otawhao.
Waipa.
Whata Whata.
Karakariki.
Rangiawhia.