

SECTION IX.

WELLINGTON WEST COAST DISTRICT.

REPORT FROM WALTER L. BULLER, ESQ., R.M.

Wellington, June 25th, 1862.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to report, for the information of his Excellency's Government, that I have completed my first circuit of the Wellington West Coast District, and with, upon the whole, satisfactory results.

The circuit occupied a fortnight. The weather was most inclement and the rivers flooded, but I succeeded in keeping all my appointments. I visited all the principal villages along the coast (making a round of 260 miles), held sittings under the "Resident Magistrates Courts Ordinance" at the various European settlements, and addressed, in all, thirteen Native meetings.

I was everywhere well received: by the ultra-Kingites with respect,—by the moderate party and neutrals with cordiality,—by the loyal Natives with every demonstration of good feeling.

I do not wish to appear over sanguine, but having fairly felt the pulse of my district I shall go into my work full of hope as to ultimate success.

The number of the so-called Kingites is as large as ever, but there are not wanting indications that the *spirit* of Kingism is on the decline, and consequently we have reason to hope that, under judicious management, the party will gradually die out.

As this has been merely a preliminary or experimental circuit, it is needless that I should trouble the Government with any detailed account of my proceedings. I shall, therefore, only notice briefly the state of feeling among the Natives in each of the principal settlements I visited, and conclude with some practical suggestions as to how far, and in what way, the proposed institutions of Native Government may be safely introduced into this district.

I shall notice the settlements in the order they were visited.

1. Otaki: Population about 380.

Here the Natives are about equally divided. The line of demarcation is distinct and the feeling strong on both sides. This is evidenced by the absence of "neutrals," the zeal displayed by the one party on behalf of the flag "Tainui," and the eagerness of the other for the immediate establishment of the proposed institutions.

I held my first meeting here on the 29th ultimo. The attendance was (considering the weather) very fair, and the Kingites well represented. Wi Hapi Te Whakarawhe, the recognised head of the King party at Otaki, was present, and made a sensible and very moderate speech. In substance, he said:—"Your words are good, very good. Your proposed plan of Native Government is clear, very clear. It may bear fruit, or it may not. Had you come with angry words for my King, then I should have turned away. You speak the words of kindness and I listen. You say my work has not borne good fruit. Very well; now commence your work. If yours proves to be better, we may come over and join you. Meanwhile, we will sit quietly by, looking on. But don't provoke us with your summonses or your warrants, or there will be trouble."

This indicates a right feeling. Fair promises will not bring them over—conviction may.

The District Treasurer (Heremia Te Tuere) has lately decamped with the "Royal Exchequer" (about £16)! This has somewhat weakened public confidence in the leaders of the party, and is a circumstance in our favor.

An adjourned meeting took place on the 7th instant. The attendance was full (but few Kingites present,) and the discussion spirited. After explaining at some length the nature of the institutions offered them, I invited a free expression of opinion from any present. Thirty Natives