

1st September last, with an attendance of 60 children, male and female, under the supervision of Mr. Scott, the teacher, at a salary of £100 per annum.

The attendance up to 30th June last has been very good, there being on the rolls on that date 37 boys and 17 girls, the average attendance for last quarter being 35½. School fees, at the rate of 1s. per month for each scholar, have been duly paid, and accounted for by a regularly appointed Committee, chosen by the votes of the majority of the male inhabitants of the Iruharama Native School district, in terms of the Act. A portion of the cost of the building, viz., £51, has been paid by the Natives, and a further contribution of £9 is forthcoming; over and above which, the whole of the timber was conveyed by the Maoris in canoes from town, over rapids and against a strong current, to the site, sixty miles from Wanganui, at their own charge, with the exception of a few rations supplied by the Government.

The schoolhouse has since been painted, and a substantial fence is being erected around the school grounds. The progress made by the scholars has been most marked, in reading, writing, and arithmetic, in the English language, and a beginning has been made in acquiring some knowledge of geography and maps.

So far, this school has been a success, and the Iruharama Natives intend next Christmas to give the children a feast, to which the scholars attending the school lower down will be invited, and a great gathering is expected; and preparations are already being made in providing food for the coming event, whereby I trust a great impetus will be given to the matter of education amongst the Wanganui people.

The schoolhouse at Parikino has just been completed, and in compliance with the wishes of the Natives, it will be opened on the 1st of October next, time being required for location of the children in the immediate neighbourhood of the school, it being the intention of all the lower river settlements to take advantage of this institution as an educational establishment for their children.

The greater portion of this endowment (137 acres) will be let by the trustees, and the rent handed over to the Committee as a contribution on the part of the Natives towards payment of salary of teacher.

These institutions are conducted upon the village school system, the children attending as day scholars, and so far have met with the approval of the Natives here, but not till after considerable delay, the failure of boarding schools here and elsewhere, from a variety of causes, in days gone by (the industrial school system, and the death of several children far removed from their homes, being among them), having rendered Native Schools extremely unpopular at Wanganui.

Now, however, the Wanganui Natives are awaking to the necessity of educating their children, and I am hopeful that in future every advantage will be taken by them of the seminaries established for the diffusion of knowledge amongst them. Eventually I expect to start a school at Utapu, a populous neighbourhood some ninety miles up the Wanganui River, when the educational wants of the river tribes will be amply provided for. The Maori children make apt scholars, and, under tuition, soon acquire a fair knowledge of the English language, and it would be advisable hereafter to select a few of the most proficient ones for instruction in the higher branches of learning at a college or grammar school, so that they could qualify themselves for positions of standing and influence amongst their own people, and for other scenes of usefulness, professional or otherwise.

I have, &c.,

RICHARD W. WOON, R.M.

The Under Secretary, Native Department,
Wellington.

No. 12.

JAMES BOOTH, Esq., to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 11th July, 1874.

I have much pleasure in reporting on the satisfactory progress made by the children at Matatera Native School during the past twelve months. Several are now able to read easy lessons, and also to write them out correctly; moreover, they understand the meaning of the lessons they have been taught to read. As nothing but English is taught or spoken in the school, the progress they have made in speaking the English language is very perceptible. The most marked progress, however, is in writing; two or three of the boys and one girl write well. In geography, also, the progress is satisfactory, considering the time (thirteen months) they have been at work.

Mr. Lewis complains of the irregular attendance of some of his pupils. This is, in a great measure, the fault of the parents, as any excitement such as a *tangi*, or a visit from an East Coast chief to the district, will withdraw most of the people away from their villages sometimes for days or weeks at a time. When the parents are at home the children are only too pleased to attend. At a meeting I held at Matatera two or three days ago some of the parents of children who have to come about three miles to school over a very bad road, agreed to cultivate land at Matatera, so that the children will not be kept from school through bad weather.

Some of the parents also are not very well off just now, and the children suffer for want of proper clothing. One or two boys had very little more than a shirt by way of clothing.