

The settlement at Waitaki has only been established a little over a year, and as it is probable that it will not be a permanent one, it would be fruitless to erect a school there. The people belong principally to four other settlements, viz., Waikouaiti, Moeraki, Waimate, and Arowhenua, and will probably return by degrees to their former places of residence.

If a mixed school could be established at Taumutu it would be a great boon to the settlers, as well as the Natives, who are desirous of educating their children. At present the nearest school is at Southbridge, about seven miles distant. Mr Taiaroa, M.H.R., who has recently come to live at Taumutu, sends his sons there. The boys drive to school daily, but it is not everyone who possesses the same facilities.

Notwithstanding all that has been done in establishing schools, it is notable that at many places where the attendance might be larger, a number of children do not attend, owing to the indifference of the parents. In such districts as Kaikoura and Queen Charlotte Sound, owing to the parents living in scattered and distant localities, it is impossible for all the children to attend; but the same excuse cannot be made for such places as Kaiapoi, where there is only an attendance of twenty out of fifty-four. At Wairewa, also, the attendance might be better if it was not for the stupidity of the parents. A larger number could also attend both at Waikouaiti and Riverton, if the parents were only alive to the importance of education. At Stewart Island it is impossible for all the children to attend one school.

The beneficial effect of these schools on the rising generation is gradually manifesting itself. The children are diligent and attentive to their studies; they acquire information with great rapidity, their perceptive faculties as a rule being in advance of European children of the same age; they also exhibit great docility and patience. Considering the slender means the parents have at command for clothing their children, the pupils attending school are very decently clad, and present a cleanly appearance.

Notwithstanding the natural aptitudes for learning that the Natives possess, it does not seem possible, as far as experience shows, to educate them beyond a certain point, the general result being that after a few years' learning they take a gradual dislike to the studies they at first enjoyed—a feeling that is intensified by the idea that they have learnt all that can be taught them.

It is very important that the girls should be trained to domestic duties, to fit them for the after duties of life, as the formation of habits of cleanliness, decency, and order is most essential for the proper management of a home. High mental culture is not the object of these institutions; but through their agency a more universal good might be effected by teaching the girls habits which contribute so effectually to promote domestic comfort and social improvement.

According to the census taken last month, the population of the South and Stewart Island is 2,061, in the proportion of 1,223 adults to 838 children. The total male population is 1,121, and the female 940. Amongst the adult population the same discrepancy exists between the sexes, but the disproportion between the adults and children is much less than in former years. I annex a table showing the population at each settlement, the number of births and deaths, the number of children attending schools, the number of half-castes, and the increase and decrease at each place since 1878. I have pointed out on several occasions the advisability of establishing a system of registration, for the purpose of securing a more accurate return of the Native population, and would suggest as a simple means of effecting it, that a list of the people at each place be prepared and sent to some reliable Native, who should be requested to mark down and furnish the dates of all the births and deaths that occurred at his settlement, and return the list at the end of the year either to the officer of the district or to the Native Department, for the purpose of having the particulars recorded. The list should then be returned to the same person, and the same course pursued annually till the next census period.

Reference to the census will show that the births preponderate at settlements where the largest mixed race are present; the fact speaks for itself, and testifies to the continuing fertility of the half-breeds.

The half-castes in the South, although not remarkable for a fine physique or a high degree of intelligence, are, notwithstanding their antecedents, a very well conducted body, and the surprise is, that a race begotten under such circumstances should have been able to raise themselves at all, or preserve an elevated and moral character. These people are a very industrious and well-behaved community; they engage in whaling, sealing, boat building, and in any pursuit they can find employment, in order to gain a livelihood; none of them are remarkably well to do, but they are all fairly comfortable, and if they had the opportunity would soon raise themselves to a competency. With the Maori, excepting in a few instances which stand out in favourable relief, the case is different, for, although not wanting in intellectual development, or any of the qualities needed to elevate a people, the race seems, after making a certain degree of progress on the road to civilization, to come to a standstill; this is no doubt attributable to the laws of heredity which fashions races and makes them what they are, and it appears to be a natural hypothesis, that it is impossible to efface in so short a time the habits and mode of life that have been transmitted to them by their progenitors. One of the greatest stumbling-blocks to their social improvement is their want of energy, and so long as that predominates their actions no progress can be expected of them.

It was confidently anticipated in the early days of the colony, and there are persons yet who still hold to the opinion, that if the Natives had been located on lands intermixed with the Europeans, in place of allowing them to live in large communities on comparatively isolated blocks of land where they can follow all their old habits and customs without interference, that the example and civilizing influence caused by the proximity of the European dwellings would have had the effect of breaking up their old communistic habits, and hastened their social advancement to a greater extent than any other course that could have been adopted. Experience, however, has shown that these anticipations have not been realized when put to the test, as the social organization of the two races still remains as distinct as ever in vicinities where an admixture of the races have been located for many years.

I have, &c.,

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