

REPORT ON SCHOOLS IN THE PROVINCE OF AUCKLAND.

Auckland, New Zealand, 17th February, 1858.

SIR,—

I have the honour to report for the information of His Excellency the Governor, that, in compliance with wishes as conveyed in your letter of 23rd June last, I have inspected the schools named in the margin, [Taupiri, Otawao, Kohonga, Waipa, St. Stephen's, St. Mary's, St. Ann's and Three Kings,] and beg to annex a detailed report upon each.

I regret that it was not in the power of the several Inspectors named by His Excellency to visit the schools at the same time (except in the case of two near Auckland), and also that the want of means of communication with the Bay of Plenty has prevented my visiting the schools in that neighbourhood, particularly as I understand that of Turanga (one of those named in your letter) to be situated in a very populous District, and, though in very active operation, to be almost without support from Government.

Referring His Excellency to the Reports annexed, as to the attendance, proficiency, domestic and industrial arrangements, &c., of each, I will proceed to notice generally their usefulness as a civilizing agency, and to offer such suggestions as the Government have been pleased to invite upon measures which appear in my judgment likely to increase their efficiency, and economize the public funds.

The Native schools may be divided into two classes, viz.—1st, those established in populous Native Districts, and 2nd, those in the neighbourhood of Auckland.

The 1st class comprises the Church of England schools at Taupiri, Kohonga and Otawao, and nominally the Wesleyan school at the Waipa, but I found no school existing there when I visited the Station, and was informed that none had existed but for a few months preceding the great rise in prices which took place after the discovery of the Australian gold fields, when it was found impossible to keep it on.

The three first named appeared to me highly useful in their operation and valued by the Natives, who, as they can visit their children whenever they wish to do so, see and appreciate the care and the kindness bestowed on them, and there can be no doubt do, though at an humble distance, endeavour to imitate the good they observe at those schools, which, although they do not of necessity belong to the Mission work, but have been voluntarily and without reward (but at great cost to themselves of time, labour, health, and income) added by the Missionaries to their other work, yet they are now so incorporated with it that no part of their Mission work is probably more important.

To instance the first school visited by me, namely, that under charge of the Rev. B. Ashwell at Taupiri. His District extends for miles along the banks of the Waikato River, and he performs service in the following churches, viz., Taupiri, Rangoriri, Kaumatutu, Wahapahu, Watawata, Kirikiriroa, Mahiri, Opuatia, Mangawaru, and Wangape; beside which services are held by Native Monitors, educated and appointed by him, and in frequent communication with him, in every collection of houses (however small) in the District. Every week also, Native Teachers, educated and living at the school, are sent out to such villages as the Missionary is unable to visit in person, and once a month the Teachers and Monitors from all parts of the District assemble at the School to report upon the progress of their several charges, and receive instruction from the Missionary in matters that may be too hard for them, and through their agency the school is chiefly provided with pupils. I had an opportunity of judging of the work and influence of the conductors of these schools, by meeting Mr. Ashwell at one of the above named villages (Kirikiriroa) on my return from Otawao. The whole population of the neighbourhood had assembled to meet him, amounting to about 200—the day was passed in examining adult candidates for Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and on the following day, upwards of 100 Natives partook of the latter, and 20 adults and 27 children received Baptism. Nothing could have been more gratifying than the whole conduct of the Natives, and on our return some children were given into Mr. Ashwell's charge to be taken back to the school with us.

These schools may therefore truly be considered centres of civilization, the influence of which is felt in every part of the District, but they are very inadequately supported, neither the clothing, food, bedding nor school accommodation being such as is desirable; and I have no doubt their efficiency would be greatly increased, first by more liberal contribution, and second by more careful distribution of funds on the part of Government.

The civilizing influence of the 2nd class, viz., those in the neighbourhood of Auckland, was not so evident to me,—they appeared to be expensive, and so little valued by the Natives as to make it difficult to keep up any considerable number of pupils; and although the machinery was in some cases very costly, the result would seem to be small when compared with those established amongst the Natives.

I visited those schools in the following order, viz., St. Stephen's Church of England School, St. Mary's and St. Ann's Roman Catholic Schools, and the Three Kings Wesleyan School, and I found the opinion which I have expressed above upon the following data: