

REPORT ON THE SCHOOL AT WAIMATE.

BY MR. EDWD. WILLIAMS.

Waimate, May, 1855.

DEAR SIR,—

In the present unsettled state of the Waimate Boys' School, it may not perhaps be considered out of place in me to offer a few remarks which may tend to throw some light upon the unfavourable position in which the School now stands—a position which cannot but be regretted by all who feel interested in the education of the New Zealand youth. I feel anxious, for the satisfaction of all parties, that a report should be made of the various incidents which have occurred during the last ten years, feeling assured that little is known of the difficulties we have had to contend against in conducting the Schools we have had under our charge, owing to various changes the country and the district have undergone.

On the removal of the Bishop from the Waimate to Auckland, with his establishment, in November, 1844, Mrs. Williams and I were solicited by the Local Committee to take charge of their Native Girls' School; and, in accordance with their wishes, we removed from our farm at Pukewharangi to the Waimate for that purpose, taking five scholars with us; and finding that twenty-five girls had already been admitted into the house as boarders, we commenced our labours. The School advanced satisfactorily, and our numbers increased rapidly; but a sudden check was experienced by the commencement of hostilities on the part of the Aborigines against the Government, and the sacking of the Town of Kororareka during the month of March in the following year, which occurrence threw the whole district into terror and confusion. Soon after this Heke, the Commanding Chief, came into Waimate, with a force of eight hundred men, causing great excitement among the friendly Natives by the menacing attitude he assumed. The Chief Tamati Waka was also in the neighbourhood, with a similar force, and had declared war against Heke. Under these circumstances, we were not surprised when the parents came forward, and expressed their determination to remove their children. It was indeed a distressing sight to witness our flourishing School, then numbering eighty-six, in three days reduced to twelve—some of whom were orphans, and the rest children whose parents resided at a distance. More than forty children were removed in one day. This was a heavy blow to the School—a blow from which it never thoroughly recovered itself.

Shortly after this, we were recommended to remove, with our small remnant, to Paihia, where Mrs. Williams and I were simultaneously attacked with typhus fever, and for more than two months incapacitated from taking any part in the care of the children. During this period, the School was gratuitously conducted by my sisters. When sufficiently recovered to undertake a journey, I visited some of the villages in the neighbourhood of the Waimate, for the purpose of endeavouring to persuade the scholars to return to the School, and so far succeeded as to obtain a promise from the parents that seven should accompany me to Paihia. Accordingly we started the next morning, but had not proceeded more than a mile on our journey, when a party of young men, rendered wicked and reckless by the war, sprang out of the fern, seized the girls, and forcibly carried them off, asking me, in the most abusive language, why I should persist in carrying on a school while all men were engaged in war.

Some months after the above occurrence, I again visited the Waimate, for the purpose of making another effort to obtain scholars, and succeeded in conducting these same girls down to the School without molestation, and with other scholars from the neighbouring district, gradually increased in numbers, until we had again the goodly number of sixty children under our care.

During the year 1846, the whole of the children were attacked with dysentery and hooping-cough in a very severe form, the School assuming the character of a hospital, and the children requiring constant attention night and day. Six of them died of the dysentery, and our own infant fell a victim to the hooping cough. The School had the benefit of advice from Dr. Philson, of Her Majesty's 58th Regiment, then residing at Paihia.

At the close of this year, peace having been established, we returned to the Waimate, by order of the Committee, feeling thankful that we had been enabled to keep the School together during the whole of the War; but from the unsettled state of the country, and from the circumstances of the Natives residing on the Coast not allowing their children to accompany us, our numbers were again reduced to fourteen. We now began to feel the evil effects of the War, in the backwardness manifested both by parents and children to take the advantage of the Schools; and it was not without difficulty that we could again obtain scholars, which, from this time, generally averaged from twenty-five to thirty in number.

After we again became settled, and the excitement produced by the late War had a little subsided, our School went steadily on, and for three years did not experience more than ordinary interruption. Visitors occasionally spent an hour in the School-room, and it was encouraging to receive their testimony to the progress the children were making.

In the month of January, 1850, this quietude was again disturbed by a party of young men, armed with bayonets, from Wi Hau's Pa in the neighbourhood, who attempted a forcible entrance into