

NATIVE SCHOOLS.

REPORT OF J. E. GORST, Esq., INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS.

Waikato, 5th December, 1861.

SIR,—

In obedience to the instructions contained in your letter, dated October 8th, 1861, I visited all the Schools in the Waikato and neighbouring districts which receive government assistance, and all village schools conducted by the Natives themselves which I could hear of. I propose first to give a short account of each of these schools, and afterwards to submit to your consideration a few general facts and remarks on the education of Native children.

1.—*Paetai.*

There is a boarding school for girls kept by a woman named Roka, with a younger woman to help her. Roka told me there were 26 children in the school, but only 12 were forthcoming at the time of my visit. She said that the rest had gone to their own homes to fetch food for their support in the school. The chief building is a raupo house about 30 feet long, situated in a sort of street, which runs at right angles to the river; it has a door and window, but only the bare earth as floor. There are four raised cribs on which Roka and some of the girls sleep. On the opposite side of the street is a smaller raupo house, in which the rest are accommodated. Some time ago a wooden school-house of large size was commenced, and the frame work has been standing for some months, but the building is now at a stand still.

All the girls but one new comer were able to read their own language well. Several, who had been at Mr. Ashwell's school, could write and do a little cyphering. The others knew nothing of arithmetic beyond the Maori and English names of numbers. Roka herself knows neither writing nor arithmetic.

They are all taught the English letters, and all repeat little Catechisms in English, but with a pronunciation such that a stranger would hardly recognize his own tongue.

The school is very ill supplied with books. Four little English Lesson books, Maori Testaments, and Prayer books given by the Church Missionary Society were all that could be found. They had 3 broken slates.

The girls are dressed in print frocks which were purchased with a donation of £10 given to the school by Governor Browne. The cleanliness and neatness in which they are kept is most praiseworthy. They live on the usual food of their neighbourhood, potatoes, flour, maize steeped in water till it putrifies, and meat, fish, or fruit occasionally.

This school receives no support whatever from the Government. The teachers have no salary. The parents give food very freely for their children, just such as they would give them at home.

2.—*Rawiri's School.*

This is a boarding school for boys, about 6 miles above Paetai, on the river bank, and not near any Native village. A short time ago there were 15 boys at this school, but the number has recently dwindled down to 5. The reason of this, as far as I could gather it, is that Rawiri is more of a farmer than a scholar, and while the land and buildings are in admirable order and are continually being improved, there was no corresponding progress in the boys' learning. The parents thought their children were only working to enrich Rawiri, and not growing any wiser, so they took them away. Rawiri and three of his boys were at work on the other side of the river, so I could not hear his own story nor find out what the boys really knew.

There are several raupo buildings forming a quadrangle; one is a large house with a door and two windows, having the floor partly paved with pumice stone. In this are 3 bedsteads for the boys. At one end is a separate room for Rawiri and his wife, containing a bed.

This school seems badly off for books. I could find nothing but Maori Testaments, and half a dozen slates, some broken. I have visited the school before and been much struck with the cleanliness and neatness of the boys. In this respect both Rawiri's and Roka's schools are patterns.

The land round the school is being fenced in by the labour of Rawiri and his boys. The work is carried forward in a manner that would do credit to a European settler. About 8 acres are this year in wheat and 1 in grass. There is a small enclosed garden by the houses, in which a vine is trained over trellis work. The school appeared well off for food, there were plenty of pigs and fowls about the premises, and a quantity of cured pork hanging up in one of the houses.

This school receives no Government assistance.