

No. 2.

The Rev. J. W. STACK to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 29th June, 1878.

I have the honor to forward herewith the report of my inspection of the Native schools in the South Island for 1878.

I am glad to report an increase of 109 in the attendance this year. Three new schools have been opened at Waikawa, Pelorus, and Molyneux, and two more schools are in process of erection at Rupaki and Kaikoura. The older Natives at Arowhenua are still averse to the opening of a school there, but the feeling in favour of having one is growing stronger among the younger men, who see the folly of depriving their children of that which alone can raise them in the social scale.

The greatest interest was manifested in my examination by the parents of the children in Otago and Canterbury, who seem now to be realizing the importance of education.

There are some matters referred to in my report which need immediate attention, and I beg respectfully to bring them under your notice.

1. The first relates to the question proposed by Topi and others with reference to the Southland Educational Reserve. Since the Government have undertaken to provide free education for all the children in the colony, will they agree to return the land bought with the £2,000 reserved out of the Stewart's Island purchase to the Natives, for their own use? As I have pointed out in my report, it is of vital importance to the schools in the South that this question should be finally settled at once.

2. It is desirable that I, or some other person, should be authorized to draw up rules for the guidance of the Native School Committees, and also for the masters, with reference to the hours of teaching, and the subjects to be taught. Enough has already been said to show that the Committees need guidance. The case which occurred at Waikouaiti last year, where, if they had been allowed, they would have dismissed a valuable master, proves that the management of the schools cannot be left to their unaided judgment. As every master is now at liberty to fix his own hours and subjects for teaching, disputes are continually arising between them and the Maoris, and to set such disputes at rest it is desirable certain fixed rules should be laid down.

3. It would be a great encouragement to the children if I were allowed to give a prize to each of the three best scholars at any school I examined.

4. I beg to recommend that each master should be supplied with a manual for teaching music: for want of one the singing is invariably confined to the simplest hymn-tunes. It is a great pity music is not more cultivated, as its influence over the children is very great and very beneficial. The Maoris are exceedingly fond of singing, but their efforts in that direction, from want of proper teaching, are generally so grotesque as to provoke mirth and ridicule: but when cultivated their voices are very good; and as they are fond of singing music, and it is one of the subjects set down to be taught, I think it ought not to be left to the discretion of each master to say whether or not he will deprive his pupils of a source of so much refined enjoyment.

In conclusion, I have much satisfaction in stating that, with one or two exceptions, those engaged in teaching the Native children in the South take a deep interest in their pupils, which is not confined to their progress in the subjects taught, but to the welfare of their whole being. Though the advance in knowledge has not been great during the past year, there has still been progress, and it is a curious fact that the most proficient scholar in the majority of the schools was a girl.

I have, &c.,

JAMES W. STACK,

Inspector of Native Schools.

The Hon. the Native Minister, Wellington.

Stewart's Island: Master, Mr. Arthur Trail.—Inspected February 27th, 1878. Highest number on the books: Boys, 15; girls, 14: total, 29. Present at inspection: Boys, 12; girls, 14: total, 26.

Reading: 1st Class: Number in class, 4. Book, 5th Royal Reader. One very good, three fair. Spelling good. Meaning understood. Pronunciation good.—2nd Class: Number in class, 10. Book, 3rd Royal Reader. Five good, five fair. Spelling good. Meaning understood. Pronunciation good.—3rd Class: Number in class, 6. Book, 2nd Royal Reader. Two good, four fair. Spelling fair. Meaning understood. Pronunciation good.—4th Class: Number in class, 4. Book, Primer. Four fair.—5th Class: Number in class, 2. Alphabet.

Dictation: The first three classes could write fairly sentences from their several reading-books. The writing was good, and the spelling much improved since last year.

Arithmetic: One doing decimals and compound proportion, well; two, practice and simple proportion, fairly; three, compound multiplication, one good, two fair; five, long division; eight, simple addition. The figures were well formed, and the work neatly set down, but with the exception of the first six the working of the sums was very inaccurate. Tables weights and measures: Twenty were examined. Of these, four good, seven fair, nine imperfect.

Recitations: Nineteen recited pieces of poetry which they had committed to memory, six very well, but the rest very indifferently.

Geography: The whole school was examined in this subject, but they all showed an intelligent acquaintance with the physical features of New Zealand, and with the recent division into counties. They also pointed out the countries of Europe, and showed an acquaintance with the products of the various countries throughout the world.

Writing: Copybooks. Three very good, six good, ten fair.

Composition: The exercise-books containing original compositions were very encouraging, showing considerable intelligence, and a thorough acquaintance with English.

Music: The children are taught singing by Mrs. Trail, but I regret that here, as elsewhere, want of a suitable manual for the teachers necessitates their confining themselves to one class of tunes.

Drill: The master has given up regular daily drill, owing to the present absence of the older boys, but some of the exercises are practised in the schoolroom.