

“poor and destitute persons being inhabitants of the Islands in the Pacific Ocean.” Although, between fifteen and twenty years ago, large and valuable Grants of Crown Land were gratuitously given to these institutions, and were supplemented from time to time by considerable sums of public money, each of them is at present quite impotent for the purposes of the Trust, and has been comparatively ineffective for some time past. Their use for several years seems to have been chiefly directed to the maintenance, partly at the cost of the Provincial Government of Auckland, of destitute European children in that Province. The sole fulfilment of the Trust of St. Stephen’s at present consists in allowing a private Benevolent Institution, called “The Orphan Home,” to occupy five (out of sixty-seven) acres of land, at a nominal rent; and it is remarkable that that Institution, which is unendowed, appears effectually to achieve its object. The Three Kings School is closed, and a claim preferred against the Estate (the interest of which is vaguely estimated at £100 per annum) for aid rendered to it in the purposes of the Trust by the Wesleyan Mission, to whom that estate was freely granted for such purposes. (See Rev. Mr. Buller’s evidence, page 21.)

The building of St. Mary’s College, the cost of which was mainly contributed by the Government, was erected, not upon the land granted as an endowment, but upon land in its vicinity, bought by the Roman Catholic Bishop for himself and his successors; and the land (twenty acres) on which it stands has been alienated to other persons,—sixteen acres sold to one person under a mortgage deed, and four acres, with the College buildings, sold to another under a judgment of the Supreme Court, for a private debt of about £300, no part of which debt (see Mr. McIlhone’s evidence, page 12) was, so far as the witness was aware, incurred on account of St. Mary’s College, but had arisen out of private transactions. It should be added that the latter purchaser (Mr. William Swanson) bought these four acres with the view of preventing the entire alienation of the land, which he rightly considered discreditable, and has written a letter to the Vicar-General, in the absence of the Bishop, at Auckland, undertaking to re-convey the land on receiving back the purchase-money, £325, without interest, either within two months after Bishop Pompallier’s return, or, in case of his not returning, within eighteen months from the date of that letter, 3rd March, 1869. Mr. Swanson, however, states in his evidence (page 12), that he will assume possession of the property if it is not used for the maintenance of orphans.

It is only right to say, however, that the absence of Bishop Pompallier, who personally conducted to a great extent the affairs of the Estate, has no doubt precluded the Commissioners from ascertaining all the circumstances of this alienation, which, it is respectfully submitted, should receive the special consideration of the Legislature, with a view to saving the public interests in the property in question.

The Commissioners have to submit to your Excellency this their first Report.

(L.S.) ALFRED DOMETT, Chairman.  
 (L.S.) G. S. COOPER.  
 (L.S.) R. HART.  
 (L.S.) W. GISBORNE.

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NOTE.—Commissioners F. D. Bell and T. Heale were absent from Wellington when this Report was sent in.

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