

children who formerly attended that institution have moved off with them to the Murimotu country, to cultivate and settle; to be followed by others: and the attendance at Parikino School was much affected by the sittings of the Land Court held here recently, the parents of many of the children having drawn them away to attend the Court, where their claims to land were being adjudicated upon. I feel bound to refer to this matter, as it affords an explanation for the fluctuating attendance of scholars at the up-river schools, as shown by the returns. Everything has been done to render these schools popular amongst the Natives, a most liberal support having been afforded by the Government, and no effort has been wanting on my part, and that of the teachers and some of the chiefs, to secure a proper attendance of the Native children, so that they might partake of the benefits to be derived from systematic instruction at the village schools of the district.

The great fault lies with the parents themselves, who do not compel (as they should) their children to attend school regularly and continually; and from an objection on their part to pay the fees, which are merely nominal, viz. one shilling a month! The fact is that, owing to their improvidence in many ways, they find it inconvenient to pay their dues regularly, as the quarters come round; and, as a consequence, the fees have to stand over in many cases for future collection. After much trouble, I have succeeded in getting in most of the outstanding fees to end of last year, and expect to obtain the balance at a future date, along with the other moneys as they become due. The attendance at the Jerusalem School has further been affected by a change in the appointment of teacher to that establishment; Mr. Scott, the former master, having been succeeded last January by Mr. Donaldson, under whose efficient control and management the school has revived, and the attendance augmented. I hope that under his experienced supervision this school will now progress satisfactorily. It is important that it should do so, as the locality is a populous one and very central, and, if the Natives only sufficiently appreciated the value of this institution, a large and continuous attendance of children would be secured to this school.

The Parikino School is not so favourably situated, as the small settlements on the lower part of the river are much scattered, and but few reside in the locality. I think some change will be required in the management of this school, viz. in a somewhat modified boarding-school system, so as to secure the proper maintenance and supervision of the children coming from the distant pas, complaints having reached me of the want of attention of the resident Natives in these respects. However, this is a matter for future consideration, as I have called a meeting of the tribes to be held shortly in the neighbourhood, with the view to discussing the whole question, and obtaining a better and enlarged attendance at this school, the majority of the children having hitherto held aloof, much to my annoyance. Every encouragement has been held out to the parents to send their children to this school, and, last Christmas, Hakaria, the chief of the settlement where the site is, gave a most liberal entertainment to the parents and children, including the Jerusalem scholars and their relatives and friends; and prizes were distributed according to your request; and a fresh impetus seemed to have been given to the support of this Institution by the Natives, which so far has proved barren of results. I fully reported on this gathering at the time, which account would form a proper appendage to this report.

The teacher, Mr. Nickless, is most efficient and painstaking, and has ever shown more than ordinary interest in the success of this school, and naturally he feels rather discouraged with the Natives, for their negligence and supineness in the all-important matter of obtaining a good education for their children. However, notwithstanding sundry misgivings, I am not without hope that, sooner or later, the Natives will duly prize the matter of educating their offspring, and that some day valuable aid will be afforded by them towards the support and improvement of the educational establishments started by the New Zealand Government in their midst, and which have hitherto been so highly fostered by the department under your immediate supervision and control.

The Jerusalem School building has lately undergone certain alterations and improvements, at a cost of some £70, whereby sufficient accommodation has been afforded for the teacher and his family; and I would recommend like improvements being executed at Parikino School building next spring, as the teacher there and his wife are much put about for the want of sufficient house room for their family.

The children of both teachers attend these schools, which is a matter of advantage to the Maori pupils, who, from frequent intercourse and conversation with the European children, are enabled to pick up English much more readily than they otherwise would.

I am happy to say that both Messrs. Donaldson and Nickless are very much liked by the Natives, and that they do good service amongst them in attending to their many wants, both religious, moral, and physical. Good service has been done by them in dispensing medicine amongst the sick, and in some instances life has been saved through their instrumentality; and for this service they are entitled to some consideration at your hands, particularly as their salaries are but small. An additional allowance to the school teachers, on account of these important and valuable services, would be money well spent: far more so than paying £75 per annum to a Native medical officer in town, whose advice many of the Maoris now decline to accept.

During my late up-river circuit, I held an inspection of the two schools in my district, the result of which I have the honor to lay before you.