

born in New Zealand conceiving the circumstances surrounding the "interesting facts," or of the ways and means taken by different Kings to rid themselves of dangerous rivals, I desire to know of what value such indefinite information will be to the children after it has been mentalized—the result of many bitter tears. Will such mental facts assist in making them better citizens, better mechanics, better artisans and farmers? To know when Hengist and Horsa landed in England, when all the wolves were destroyed in that country, when the Battle of the Standard was fought, when Ireland is said to have been conquered, and when Wat the Tyler split the tax-collector's skull, will neither improve the morals of the children, improve their powers of observation, nor make them better able to pursue their various callings in life. I have yet to learn of what use is every fact in history, in outside political geography, and in grammar rules and definitions, to those who cannot realize the facts, and know how to use them to some good purpose; and certainly it is impossible for the children in the district schools to form conceptions of the things they are required to learn in these subjects, so unlike are they to their own daily experiences. Ask a boy in the Third Standard, born in the Forty-Mile Bush, whereabouts England is, what it is, whether a large town, or a country, or a continent, and it will readily be seen what conceptions children possess in outlying districts of things outside their own horizon of observation. And no one who understands child-mind and its progressive development can be astonished at children—especially country and bush children—mistaking England for a town or a continent instead of a country. And if children are unable to form correct conceptions of things existing beyond the limits of their own experiences, how useless it is to require of them to go to this same country, but to a period in it utterly unlike England of to-day, and asking them to realize events that have happened there centuries ago—events that cannot be compared to any events that are constantly taking place around them, and having no influence whatever upon the welfare of themselves, of this district or country.

ADAPTATION IN EDUCATION NEEDED.—I venture to caution the Board as to the benefits derived from teaching these subjects as now arranged. I have a high opinion of the value of history, geography, and grammar of the right sort, and rightly pursued, but I think there are many subjects of more importance to the happiness of the children, and to the prosperity of the district, and coming within their experiences, which might be substituted in the school curriculum. Children are obtaining an acquaintance with knowledge which in itself is of a most indefinite character, and tending, as it appears to me, to make them discontented with their lot in life, because it is knowledge which they feel incapable of using in their various pursuits and callings. The future bushman, ploughman, and mechanic are provided with the same tools to perform entirely different functions in life, with the result, as I have shown, that, in the schools, words are now an equivalent for ideas, memory for mind, and instruction for education.

READING.—The remaining subjects of the syllabus—namely, reading, writing, and arithmetic—are in some cases very well taught; but at present the children learn to read under great disadvantages. Seldom indeed is it possible to hear expressive or intelligent reading, but the fault does not rest with the children. They cannot express what they do not understand, and the allusions in the majority of the reading books in use are mostly of this sort. Still there is ample room for improvement. Many teachers appear to think the reading lessons are so easy that they do not prepare them beforehand. This is evident from the fact that not a dozen teachers in the district possess class-books of their own. If teachers cannot gain success in this subject, they might do something to show that they deserve it, instead of which complaint is often made that children do not provide themselves with the necessary school books, forgetting that it is the teacher's first duty to set the example.

WRITING.—Very few of the children are able to write really well, resulting, as it seems to me, from permitting them to form the letters too slowly. Freedom in the use of the pen is everything in writing, as it is essentially a subject acquired by imitation. Where old English letters are taught in conjunction with the ordinary writing lesson I find that the progress is more rapid, and the final results—boldness, legibility, rapidity—are more certain. Very great attention is given to writing in copy-books at Takapau, Ashley-Clinton, and Puketapu, where most of the writing obtained full marks.

ARITHMETIC.—In arithmetic very many failures have taken place. The subject is one which tests the power of a teacher possibly more than all the other class subjects. It cannot be successfully taught except by the constant reference to concrete forms and examples, and it is here that many of the teachers fail. The subject is well taught at Napier, Gisborne, Havelock, and Hastings Schools, but only the pupils in the former school had acquired the habit of setting down the work neatly and tastefully arranged. I wish the teachers generally would accustom their pupils to take a pride in setting down on paper their work as neatly as possible. Habits of neatness and carefulness among children are as valuable to them as either of the individual subjects they are required to learn. But little extra trouble is required to foster these habits in the school-room.

QUALITY OF WORK, ETC.—As to the quality of the standard-work, I am pleased, in an increasing number of instances, to speak in terms of unqualified praise. Teachers are beginning to realize that they have a definite amount of work to do, and certainly the majority of them strive to do it. But there are several employed in the schools on whom experience nor advice appears to have the least effect. I very much sympathize with the children they are said to teach, and I regret that they themselves have so much mistaken their profession. Several of the district schools are in an efficient state, and a few others give great promise as to the future by their steady improvement. The character of most of the standard-work done by the pupils in these schools affords evidence of hard and determined work on the part of the teachers engaged in them. The requirements for a pass in the standard examination were more rigid than in the previous year, as the instructions to Inspectors, as they appear in the annual report of the Minister of Education for 1879–80, state that "Inspectors should, in any case of doubt, lean to the side of strictness in the interpretation of the standards." Whilst feeling that the Inspector of the district, in his examination, should be the sole judge whether a child who fails in a class subject, or even two, should be allowed to pass or not—he being familiar with the circumstances of the case—I have on this point, at least, striven