

It has taken us all long to learn this lesson thoroughly, mainly because so much that is plausible can be said in favour of proceeding from the known to the unknown, of going step by step from what you know to what you don't. It seems also very reasonable to apply this principle by asking, "Here is an easy Maori sentence that the child knows, and here is an easy English sentence that it does not know; why is it unwise to teach the child that the thought contained in the Maori sentence is expressed in the English in such-and-such a way?" The reason is, of course, that three elements are introduced when two are sufficient, and that the method therefore wastes energy and causes fatal distraction. The elements referred to are—(1) the Maori words standing for (2) the act, object, or what-not, and (3) the English words standing for this act or object. The fault of the old method is that it is complex; the principal merit of the new way is that it is simple—and, what is more, that it has been tried and proved by actual experience for untold ages. The three-element method is comparatively modern, or new-fangled even, and could have been invented only by pedants who had left off watching life, and had forgotten their mothers or nurses, and the way in which these had taught them their mother-tongue. It remains true, however, that translation of Maori into English is a useful exercise for young Maoris after they are able to do it with ease, and it is so for many reasons, which need not be discussed here; but perhaps the principal reason is that it enables young Maoris to get out of the one-sidedness exemplified in the rather silly story about the Jack-tar that objected to the French language because it called a horse a "shovel," and a cabbage a "shoe"; and, further on, to see that the same thought, obtained at first by observation of the thing and its relations, can be expressed in more than one way. In the 1902 report, pages 14 and 15, a pretty full account is given of the method of teaching English now in use in Maori schools, and especially of the early stages of that method. Later on considerable latitude is granted, but it is firmly believed that the mode of beginning work in English laid down in the place referred to is not only the best, but, at present, the sole rational method of teaching foreign children English. It is believed that the measure of success secured by other methods is due to their inclusion of this natural method—generally in a kind of envelope of mere didactic rubbish.

*Reading.*—Great changes have taken place in the teaching of this subject, and very radical ones. It is easy enough to make sport of what was done in the older Native schools, but a considerable part of it was real work. Earnest men were doing their best, and this best was sometimes wonderfully good, all things considered, although it could hardly pass muster now. The chief faults were owing to the fact that it was believed that faulty pronunciation was all that could be expected from Maoris, and that it was futile to expect them to grasp thoroughly the meaning of what was read. The principal points now attended to are the following: (1.) It is never desirable to let Maori children attack an unfamiliar and, for them, difficult piece of reading; every real difficulty is to be cleared away for them conversationally before reading begins. (2.) It is always desirable that children below Standard III. should be made acquainted, with the help of the blackboard, with all the strange words in a lesson about to be attempted. (3.) Then the class should read the lesson simultaneously, sentence by sentence, after the teacher, until the work is thoroughly mastered. (4.) Individual children should then be called upon to read. (5.) Finally—and this is of great importance—the master should assure himself by actual questioning that every child is well up in all the work done by the class. Of course, this means that progress through the book is slow at first, very slow perhaps; but the method is a sound one, and it gives solid progress—in the end, progress by the proverbial "leaps and bounds."

Younger children are taught on the same principle of "thorough" throughout. Of course, there are many differences of detail. It is, on the whole, convenient that "preparatories" should be taught to read from the blackboard. Script lessons are the best, but they should be plainly and neatly written. Teachers should remember that if they scribble, their pupils will scribble also. It is unnecessary to teach children the alphabet before they begin to read. It is better to let them "pick up" the letters as they go along. The best method for teaching young Maoris to read is the "phonic," with "look-and-say" for all anomalous words. One special advantage connected with script reading-lessons for juniors is that the judicious teacher can adapt the lessons to the present needs of the class.

*Spelling.*—It is highly desirable that this subject should be kept quite distinct from the reading. It is, of course, certain that progress in spelling will help to make the reading fluent; but this is no reason for considering the spelling a mere tag to reading, as was the case in old Native-school times. Besides, its chief connection is with writing rather than with reading. Experience shows, however, that spelling-work gets on better when, so to say, it is in business for itself. It is an old superstition that spelling can be taught by means of dictation; this is, of course, a mistake; but it is an admirable test of proficiency. Transcription is of more use, but it should be very carefully prepared and neatly written. Spelling is best taught by means of the blackboard, with much oral work. Word-building is a comparatively modern device, but very useful. It, too, works best when the powerful aid of the blackboard and exemplification in class are made use of. The building may consist of addition of letters, or of other words, as *pan, pant, panther; cart, carthorse; house, fowl-house*. The word-building may deal with words allied in meaning, as *car, cart, carry, carriage*; or with words not so allied, as *van, vanity*; finally it may be added that in teaching spelling by the word-building method *difference* may be made use of if *agreement* or *similarity* cannot be secured. Thus *van, vane, vein, vain*, is a useful sequence, although the difference in these words is more prominent than their agreement. The fact is that any bond of connection is better than none. Of course, the utility of this work can sometimes be greatly increased if the teacher is clever with his chalk, and can with two or three rapid strokes sketch illustrations of the meanings of unusual words; any way, the teacher should always assure himself that the meanings of the words dealt with are known by the children. It is well worth while to arrange matters so that spelling-lessons shall have some connection with the previous course of English lessons, without being tacked on to them. Such devices tend to make teaching concrete.