

ideal of education which obtains generally, and (2) the excellent provision made by the existing Education Act for the administration of the compulsory clause. "The New Zealand School Attendance Act, 1901," provides—

3. (1.) Subject to the provisions of the principal Act and of this Act, every child between the age of seven years and the age of fourteen years is hereby required to attend some public school not less than four times in any week that the school is open six times, six times in any week that the school is open eight times, and eight times in any week that the school is open ten times, morning and afternoon attendance being separately counted.

7. (1.) Where any child required by this Act to attend a public school has been enrolled in the register of a public school, and does not attend as provided in subsection one of section three, the parent of such child shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding ten shillings and not less than two shillings for every week in which such child failed to attend school as required by this Act.

From this it will be seen that a defaulter can be dealt with at the end of the week in which the default occurred, and, further, that in the case of persistent default over comparatively brief periods charges can be made cumulative. For example, while I was in Dunedin a parent was fined on three charges, representing defaults in three separate weeks, taken from a period of five weeks of the school term. The popular appreciation of education in the colony is shown by the strictness with which the Magistrates administer the Act. In New Zealand the maximum fine for a default during a week is 2s. In Victoria fines of 1s. and 2s. 6d. for serious default extending over three months are common, and instances of Justices expressing want of sympathy with the Act are not unknown. But the real obstacle to the efficient carrying-out of the compulsory clause in Victoria is the obligation imposed upon the Department to wait till the end of the quarter before a prosecution can be entered upon. This makes the work of street-supervision almost impossible, for a Truant Officer may observe a child playing in the streets or on the wharves for a week at a time, but he cannot do more than make an inquiry into his attendance during the past quarter, or take a note of him for use at the end of the current quarter. Probably the child will be lost sight of before the end of the quarter, for these defaulters often belong to families which are continually on the move. The best preventive of systematic irregular attendance is such a clause as that of the New Zealand Act. Under its provisions a defaulter has to be observed but two days in succession and a case has been made out against him. Again, irregular attendance is largely a matter of habit, and the attendance of other children than street *habitués* is greatly improved when the beginnings of lax attendance are dealt with. It may be argued that the power to fine a parent for the temporary irregular attendance of his child during so short a period as a week places the parent at the mercy of the administration, but in practice none but genuine defaulters are prosecuted, and there is provision for the registration of reasonable excuses with the teacher or with the School Committee, and power is given to issue exemptions in case of need. As a matter of fact, although the individual fines are heavier than with us the number of prosecutions throughout the year is less. The Truant Officer staff is much smaller than in Victoria. The expenditure for last year in salaries and allowances to Truant Officers was £1,163 7s. 11d.; that of Victoria was £6,045 16s. 5d. Here is another example of efficiency and economy due to a good law and local administration.

In the recent annual report of the New Zealand Department it is claimed that the average attendance expressed as a percentage of the number of children on the roll was 84·9—a really excellent record. In the report of the Victorian Department of the same date the percentage claimed is but 67·2. While I am convinced from my inquiries in the New Zealand schools that the average attendance in that colony is better than with us, the difference in computing educational statistics must be taken into account if a right comparison is to be made. It is, in fact, very misleading to take educational statistics without inquiring into the method of computation. The finances of the New Zealand School Boards are based upon capitation, and therefore allowances and exemptions must be made for wet days, epidemics, and other influences disturbing attendance. In Victoria not only are the conditions governing the attendance-mark very rigidly observed, but every day, whether the attendance is unavoidably low or not, is taken into account in computing the average attendance. As regards its statistics of enrolment and average attendance, the Victorian Department stands on very firm ground indeed.

It is true economy to spend thought and money upon increasing the regularity of school attendance, for not only does it train scholars in many laudable habits, but it greatly increases the efficiency of the teaching-machine. Good education is possible with an attendance such as that of Otago—viz., 88·1 per cent. of enrolment. Irregular attendance leads to systematic truancy, and nomadism, and afterwards to larrikinism on the part of the delinquents themselves, while every absence from a class affects the progress of the whole of the members of the class.

INSTRUCTION.

Primary education in New Zealand is, as in Victoria, in a state of ferment, owing to the introduction of a new syllabus of instruction. The movement is part of a larger one which is making itself felt all over the world, and is leading up to momentous changes in popular education. It was most interesting and gratifying to me to see that leading educationists in New Zealand are treading in the same path as we are in Victoria. The ideals held up and the methods prescribed for attaining them are almost identical in the two countries. All of the subjects of the Victorian programme appear in that of New Zealand, but their scope is widened, and the prescriptions under each are less definite. The Victorian syllabus has been criticized as too elaborate, that of New Zealand goes far beyond. Whether it does not err on the side of too much is a matter of opinion. In the higher standard, too, the Seventh Standard, additional alternative subjects unknown to our course of free instruction appear. These are geometry, algebra, book-keeping, shorthand, a more elaborate treatment of some sciences—e.g., electricity—and in some cases Latin, French, and German. These subjects are, no doubt, accounted for by reason of the fact that the State in New Zealand is concerned with higher primary and with secondary education, as well as with primary education. In other words, in New Zealand