

what result I have not yet heard. In the case of the adults, I suppose it is hopeless to expect them to give up a habit which, introduced to them amongst other undesirable "blessings" of our civilisation, grips them so firmly. In one case, where I visited a settlement to make inquiries about the proposed transfer of a school from a Board to the Department, all the people present were so absorbed in their game—the stakes being placed on the grass before them—that I could only feel that I was hindering their sport, and was thus a nuisance. There are other instances where I know that the people have played on in relays for some days and nights, and large sums are frequently lost and won. As the card-playing takes place in the one room which is common to all, it may easily be seen that the children have, for the most part, to be satisfied with very little sleep.

Another weakness of the Maori for which frequently the children have to suffer is his inordinate vanity and love of show. These at times are superior to his love for his children, which otherwise, indeed, is not inferior to that which we pakehas have for our own. But he dearly loves show, and at a wedding I have known a man to display a number of bank-notes on a stick to show what a handsome present he is making. A shrewd old couple, who, by the way, set a splendid example to other Maoris by their self-reliant qualities, had in their whare, near the roadside, a bag of sugar packed between two bags of flour—a sure sign of affluence. These were not intended for use—they were placed there mostly as silent witnesses to the fact that the owners of the house were in comfortable circumstances. Now, this vanity is frequently transferred to the children, who attend the school examination in fine raiment, often of excellent quality and resplendent hue. If the Inspector happens to arrive before he is due, as he often does, there is a wild rush home, as the children seem convinced that they cannot appear before him without their "examination clothes." Boots, to which the brown feet are strangers for almost every other day in the year, are put on; not infrequently the father's coat and the brother's hat are borrowed for the occasion, and the boots, at any rate, prove a source of pain both to the child and to the Inspector. Teachers are very often told by parents that a child cannot come to school as he has not suitable clothes. It is very difficult to persuade them to send the child with what clothes he has, but I hope that our teachers will not encourage the parents to incur special expense for the examination day, or, indeed, for any other school day. Provided a child's face and body are clean—and teachers are expected to see that they are—one can hardly take exception to the fact that his coat is not altogether *à la mode*, nor can one help pitying a boy or a girl who has had during a holiday to work on the gumfields to obtain the money with which to procure some decent clothes for school. There is no more pleasant sight in a school than a class of clean Maori children, and in this respect the gospel of soap and water is, in my opinion, the proper subject of discourse for all our teachers.

There is, I regret to say, another reason why I sincerely hope that teachers will pay even greater attention to the cleanliness of their children than ever, and this is that both our children and our schools are frequently condemned as being not clean enough to warrant European parents sending their children to a Native school. Indeed, this has in one or two instances been alleged as the reason for the necessity of establishing separate schools. Although I have to admit that the general cleanliness of both children and school are in a few cases—and only a few—not satisfactory, I feel bound to assert that in these cases the fact is a grave reflection upon the teachers of these particular schools, who are in this respect not fulfilling the duties required of them by the Department. As a general rule, however, I think that the condition of our schools as regards cleanliness will compare very favourably with that of the ordinary country school under the jurisdiction of Boards. It must be borne in mind that the cleaning of the school is usually performed by the children under the direction of the teacher. Many of the children take a personal pride in their work, and I can point to many schools where the floors are scrubbed till the boards are white, and where there is not a spot of ink to be seen on the desks, although they have been in use several years. Indeed, I feel it my duty, while urging teachers to renewed efforts, to express my sense of appreciation of the work done in this direction by the children and themselves.

The Native-schools system has now been in existence for more than twenty-five years, and it seems rather late in the day to have to ask for tolerance. But it is astonishing to find what an amount of either misapprehension or else misrepresentation exists with regard to them. I was assured by Europeans interested in the establishment of a school in a district where many children were Maori that they did not want a Maori school—first, because they did not wish their children to be taught Maori, and, next, because the standard of education in Native schools did not extend beyond Standard II! Not only was this their opinion, but they had persuaded the Maoris that it was correct. In another place exception was taken to the Native school on the ground that the Maori children taught the Europeans to use bad language. It does not take a very great amount of reflection to lead one to the conclusion that the reverse is most likely to be the case. That there are some schools which cannot be regarded otherwise than weak, or more or less unsatisfactory, I am not prepared to deny; but to apply this condemnation to the schools as a whole is to go beyond the truth. Persons who feel interested in Native-school work are cordially invited to visit at any time such schools as may be within their reach. We desire that our critics should be made thoroughly acquainted with the facts first hand, and I feel sure that our teachers will be only too pleased to receive such visitors as may desire to know the *modus operandi* of a Native school.

The year 1906 will most probably be the last in which the system of payment, by examination results, of part of the teacher's salary will be followed. A new scale of salaries has been arranged, and the effect will be to increase generally the salary given to assistants, to distribute more evenly the total amount paid to all teachers, and to produce less variation in the salary. I am glad, also, to welcome to our ranks Mr. J. Porteous, M.A., an experienced teacher, who has been appointed Assistant Inspector. His arrival, towards the close of the year, enabled the work of examination of all the schools to be completed. In the coming year I hope, with his help, to carry out last year's project—viz., to separate the examination from the inspection, the latter work being taken without notice being given to the teachers.

Recently taken photographs which accompany this report will give an idea of the outward appearance of some of our schools, the children, and their work. I have, &c.,

WILLIAM W. BIRD.