

purpose, though the Department, in recognition of their keeping up the supply of fuel, makes a grant towards providing recreation for the children. The matter of seeing to the attendance is generally one for the Chairman, who, in the few cases in which extreme action is found necessary, acts as Truant Officer and serves notices upon negligent parents.

In addition, the Committee exercises a due amount of supervision over the conduct of the school, and when the occasion arises the Chairman is not slow to report to the Department, or to lay his grievances before the Inspector.

In most schools the Committee, as well as the parents, attend on the day of examination and follow the proceedings with much interest. At the conclusion of the work, and this by the way means after a long day, for the work connected with the inspection and examination of even a small Native school cannot be accomplished in an hour or two, the Chairman and members of Committee bring forward any business they may desire to have settled. Nor do they hesitate to speak their minds in their characteristic way.

As showing the keen interest evinced by some Committees, I may state that in spite of the strong counter-attraction offered by the unveiling of the Cook Memorial in Gisborne, a function to which nearly all the Maoris of the district were attracted, the Committee of the Whangara Native School held that it was their business to be present at the examination of the school, which took place on that day, and they and the parents attended in a body.

From this short account of the doings of Native School Committees, it will be seen that, so far from being useless, they may play a very valuable part in the welfare of the school. As it has been represented to the Department that in places where there are European children attending it may be advisable to have some Europeans directly elected as members of the School Committee, steps are now being taken to provide for this.

CONCLUSION.

It must be evident to all who have known the Native schools since the olden days when the education of the Maori was in its infancy that the swaddling clothes have for years been laid aside. Even since my own connection with the schools, I am conscious of the fact that very great progress has been made and that the credit of this progress is due to the teachers who, remote from the comforts and advantages of civilization, pursue their duty with a loyal devotion that is a credit to them. From the nature of the case, it is necessary that the persons in charge of Native schools shall be such as can be relied upon to carry on the work of their school at all times, and while it would be futile to expect that every teacher should possess the same degree of teaching ability or show the same degree of efficiency in the management of his school, there is now no room in the service for those who may, by neglect of duty and unbecoming conduct, lower the good name of the Native school teachers as a whole and the prestige of the Department.

Much valuable assistance has been rendered during the year, both to myself and to the teachers, by Mr. J. Porteous, M.A., Assistant Inspector, and I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of his services.

A few photographs accompany this report.

WILLIAM W. BIRD.
