

One way by which wider reading can be secured is by the employment of "silent reading." Teachers in charge of several standard classes often find it a matter of some considerable difficulty to arrange their time-table in such a manner that all the classes are kept continuously employed. In most cases they resort to written work of one kind or other, which suffers from want of proper supervision, and is apt on that account to be of an unsatisfactory character. The time available in this way might well be set apart for independent reading, silent reading, or private study, which when properly directed will be of the highest value, especially when supported by home reading. The teacher must take precautions to prevent waste of time by the less serious pupils, and must not let the less intelligent children struggle vainly with difficulties which they may encounter. The first steps in the formation of the habit of silent reading will consist in the silent preparation by the class of their reading-lesson; and this we recommend should be adopted by all teachers.

The method of teaching reading in use in Native schools is that which is regarded by the highest educational authorities as being the most natural and scientific. The Conference on the Teaching of English in London Elementary Schools (England), which sat between 1906 and 1908, expressed the opinion after a careful examination of the methods in use in the City of London schools that "the phonic method is probably the most scientific of all systems devised to make the art of reading easy. It lays a sure foundation for spelling, insures clear enunciation, excites the child's interest, and gratifies its love of power, of discovery, and self-expression. It appeals to hand, eye, ear, and the whole vocal mechanism at a period in the child's life when the organs are growing rapidly and are increasingly responsive to training. Correct articulation and good pronunciation are more readily attained by this method than by any other, and these form the surest foundation upon which the eye and hand can build." We are convinced from the facility with which the children learn to read, from the correctness of pronunciation, and from the clearness of enunciation and articulation which are attained by its use, that the above method is eminently suitable for teaching our pupils to read.

Strange to say, we find in several schools where European children are in attendance a decided objection on the part of their parents to this method of instruction, in favour of the alphabetic method by which they themselves were taught years ago, and which, according to the authorities above referred to, is happily falling into disuse, and has only its historical interest to save it from oblivion. The fact that the child can read with fluency and correct pronunciation is quite ignored because, though he has been at school for so many months, "he has not been taught to say the A B C." In several instances we have known of cases where the parents have set themselves to remedy what they consider to be the defect in the teacher's instruction, with the result that the unfortunate child is hopelessly confused and the teacher's efforts greatly impeded. In the case of children admitted to Native schools from other schools in the Dominion we frequently find a similar difficulty owing to the divergence of methods, and it takes some time and not a little patience on the part of the teacher to overcome the consequent defects in the child's reading, to say nothing of the prejudice of his parents.

*Recitation.*—Recitation is still a comparatively new subject, and does not, as a rule, show to much advantage. This, we consider, to be due to the fact that most of the poetry in the reading-books has no fascination for the children. A selection of pieces suitable for Maoris is very difficult to obtain. Dramatic situations such as occur in "Lochinvar," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and similar poems appeal strongly to the senior pupils, who appreciate them keenly and recite them well, while the old-time nursery-rhymes and the simplest stories provide suitable material for the juniors. Only pieces that the children can realize and put into action should be chosen, so that the power of picturing what has never been seen, but only described, should be cultivated. It is almost out of the question to expect the pupils in Maori primary schools to realize the beauties of much of the best of our English poetry, which can be treated successfully only at a higher stage of progress, as in the secondary schools, in several of which passages from Shakespeare, for instance, are recited in an admirable manner.

We find on the part of the parents an increasing appreciation of their children's ability to recite poetry, a fact which suggests that the aid of the parents might be enlisted to encourage the children to read aloud at home, in order to supplement the comparatively small amount of oral practice that is possible in the class at school. This has been done in some of the settlements, and it has afforded capital practice to the children, while at the same time it has been a source of much gratification to the parents.

*Spelling.*—On the whole there is little ground for complaint with regard to the spelling. In the infant classes it is generally well done, and now that the children throughout the schools have had some initial training in sounds and word-building we find that as far as the spelling of words in their own vocabulary is concerned the pupils of the higher classes show a greater degree of proficiency than formerly. We are sure that teachers will find that, if the children are taught to read scientifically, and the arrangement of the readers, especially those in the infant and lower classes, is carefully attended to, the difficulties in spelling will be greatly reduced.

*Writing.*—It is true that most Maoris who have passed through the schools in their young days write very well indeed, but we look in vain in many schools for any testimony which would enable us to share in the opinion commonly held that Maori children are naturally good writers. In many of the schools the writing is nothing short of bad, nor has the reintroduction of headline copybooks done much to improve it. The explanation seems to be that there is not enough definite teaching of writing—the pupils are allowed to write at random, with little or no attention to the copy, and in many schools they sit in any position they may choose. Correct posture at handwriting-lessons is of the highest importance, and teachers should from the earliest stages take steps to train the pupils to sit properly—i.e., upright, and square to the desk—and to hold the pen properly.