

cases where there has been a well-defined breach of the law in respect to attendance, and in several instances proceedings have been successfully instituted against offending parents. There is therefore no reason why children should be allowed to absent themselves for a considerable period upon insufficient grounds. As a matter of fact, they are required by law to obtain a certificate of exemption before being absent, and this can be issued only for specific reasons. But, as we have stated in former reports, we do feel that, apart from compliance with the requirements of the law, the most potent factors in securing regular attendance are the inherent attractions of the school and the personality of the teachers.

MISSION SCHOOLS.

In addition to the Native-village schools there are four denominational schools—viz., *Otaki*, *Putiki*, *Tokaanu Convent*, and *Matata Convent*—engaged in the education of Maori children, which are inspected by us. At the end of the year there were 174 children on the rolls of these schools, the average weekly roll number being 174, and the percentage of regularity of attendance being 88.4. The mission school formerly existing at Te Hauke, Hawke's Bay, was closed during the year, and we understand that a public school is being established in its place.

The number of pupils on the rolls of the secondary schools, named under Boarding-schools, at the 31st December was 369; the average weekly roll number was 365, and the percentage of regularity of attendance 94.2.

There were 122 schools affording instruction to Maori children and subject to inspection by the Department's Inspectors, the total number of children on the rolls being 5,237, as compared with 5,174 at the end of the previous year.

GENERAL REMARKS.

The following paragraphs contain a summary of our views with respect to the proficiency attained in the various subjects of the school curriculum:—

1. **ENGLISH.**—(a.) *Reading*: This continues to show steady progress. As regards the pronunciation the mistakes made by Maori children are not connected with the mispronunciation of vowel sounds as in the case of Europeans. We never hear "time" pronounced "taime" or "toime," or "take" pronounced "tike." The difficulties we have to meet are those arising from confusion to the consonantal sounds, causing the children to say "dime" for "time," and so on. Thanks to the training in phonics which has been in vogue in Native schools for some years past, and which, we are glad to learn, is now to be provided for in the public-schools syllabus, these difficulties have been largely overcome, and the enunciation is, on the whole, very satisfactory indeed. Indeed, it has been publicly stated that the most perfect English accent that the speaker had ever heard was among the Maoris.* The reading, however, is still lacking in distinctness, and we accordingly again direct the attention of teachers to this weakness. Modulation and expression also leave a good deal to be desired, for we do not find that these have advanced to the same extent as the power of comprehension. The present miscellaneous readers have now been in use for some years, and we think that the introduction of a new series should not be longer delayed—indeed, we hope to have them in the schools during the latter part of the current year. We suggest that the miscellaneous readers be replaced by continuous readers, the *School Journal*, in our opinion, meeting all the requirements of the former.

Libraries have been established in a greater number of schools, and have done much to enlarge the children's stock of ideas and to encourage them to read for themselves.

Recitation is still far from being satisfactory except in a comparatively small number of schools. There has been little improvement in the selection of pieces to be learnt, and we cannot recall any single case in which a prose passage has been chosen. The need of a text-book of poems suited to our requirements is much felt.

In *spelling* a fair amount of success is achieved. For some time past we have discarded oral spelling, combining the teaching of the subject with practice in word-building, instruction in phonics, and dictation. We consider that the improvement manifest during the past four or five years has justified the method so far as our schools are concerned. The mistakes referred to in former reports—viz., misuse of "were" for "where," "there" for "their," &c., and conversely—are still very frequently met with, as is also the tendency to omit the final "s" and "ed."

The *writing* in the schools is on the whole satisfactory. The copybooks, however, do not seem to serve the useful purpose that it was anticipated they would, and unless systematic instruction is given in connexion with them they have little value as an aid to the teaching of writing. In several schools remarkably good results have been achieved in a comparatively short time by the adoption of an upright style, which, experience has shown, is readily acquired and easily taught. We propose to introduce this method to the notice of all teachers, and we are satisfied that the headline copybook will soon be again discarded.

In English, though some progress is evident, we feel that much more must be done before the subject can be regarded as altogether satisfactory. The infant classes and lower standards have indeed made great strides in English during the past few years, but the upper classes are, in a measure, still marking time, and will continue to do so until more life is thrown into the teaching of the subject. Not that the ability of the children to speak English has not improved very considerably; it undoubtedly has done so. The written work is yet meagre and "scrappy," and often consists of a heterogeneous mass of undigested statements, which show that the pupil has not assimilated the information supplied, and that he has not been trained to deliver in

* See "Report of the Imperial Conference of Teachers' Associations, 1912."