

schoolrooms. One finds little difficulty in believing that the civilising influence of such school residences was but small. At the present time our schoolhouses, residences, school-grounds, and gardens are turned out of hand in such form that teachers and committees alike may take a real pride in them. It may be added that our school furniture, which twenty years ago was common and poorly adapted to its purpose, is now, besides being pretty uniform, neat and handy and well up to date.

Just here, perhaps, the financial question comes in, How could all these improvements be paid for without unduly increasing the cost per head of the education of Maori children? For our present practical purpose it may suffice to say that our cost per head is now very considerably less than it was years ago. The increased average attendance far more than neutralises the increased average expense resulting from the improvement in the accommodation. A few figures will show how great this increase has been: At the beginning of 1880 the total number of children "belonging" to the schools was 1,336; at the end of 1899 the number was 3,065. The strict average for 1880 was 1,171; for 1899 it was 2,435. Thus it will be seen that the attendance has been considerably more than doubled. It may be remarked incidentally that the increase here shown is a rather striking one, seeing that it has taken place among a race supposed by many to be losing heart and dying out. It is worth mentioning, too, that these high numbers have been secured in a year remarkable for the frequency and severity of epidemic sickness in Maori settlements.

The organization of our schools is altogether different from what it used to be. The introduction of a standard system was really a first-rate improvement. It gradually induced the teachers to direct their efforts towards the attainment of definite ends. Next came the perception of the advantages to be derived from classification of children with reference to the ends that they were capable of attaining, and consequently were expected to attain. Gradually all other bases of classification—such as size, age, importance of parents of pupils—became quite obsolete, and classification was made to depend on educational considerations alone. Time-tables also were gradually improved. Due proportionate attention was given to the various subjects. Slowly but surely approaches were made to strict observance of time-table precepts. From time to time, as the schools have been able to bear the change, the standards have been raised, and the incidence of effort on particular subjects has been changed in accordance with the improved ability of the children and the increased skill of the teachers. Also the Department has seen fit from time to time to make changes in salaries, holidays, apparatus, &c., or to remove pressure here and bring a stimulus to bear there, in ways that seem to have led in the end to greatly increased efficiency. It may be added that while uniformity has been striven for as a real good, endeavours have been made to avoid as far as possible pedantic demands for conformity to one stereotyped plan. Where a teacher shows power and originality the display of these is welcomed, even if it lead to considerable aberration from the usual course.

It is not necessary to deal at length with the subject of discipline in the Native schools. I said in my report for 1880, "Maori children if properly dealt with are very easy to manage. They take great interest in their work when taught intelligently, and they are seldom disposed to be either sullen or disorderly." I see no reason to change the views thus expressed. Discipline, it may be added, depends very largely on the personal disposition and characteristics of the master. One man is a good disciplinarian and another is not, and there, for the time, is an end of the matter. The man with the negative qualification, however, is in many cases susceptible of indefinite improvement, and may in the end succeed in passing over into the ranks of good disciplinarians; but the capacity for doing this implies, on the one hand, a latent power of self-control and faculty for concentrating attention and effort on the particular business on which one is engaged. There is nothing so likely to develop these latent powers as a thoroughly sound school organization. On the other hand, if a teacher is lackadaisical, or flighty, or incapable of taking interest in his work, he is most unlikely to be a good disciplinarian, even though he may by means of something very like cruelty be able to secure a death-like stillness in his schoolroom. It is, I believe, right to say that although our discipline is not always and everywhere quite what could be desired, yet under the influence of improved organization many inexperienced teachers who formerly failed to maintain good discipline have come over into the ranks of competent disciplinarians.

In one way and another the thoroughly incapable teacher has been induced to leave us, the effective, if somewhat latent, eliminative agency being always the organization that has been gradually getting itself evolved in connection with our Native-school work; it is just this, too, that has tended to exclude from our ranks persons altogether unlikely to become competent and successful teachers.

The only other matter that requires treatment is the improvement in the instruction given in Native schools—its nature and effects. There are two points that should be briefly dealt with before an attempt is made to treat, with some completeness, the thesis to be maintained with regard to Native-school instruction—viz., that it is now, all things considered, very satisfactory. The two preliminary questions are—(1.) What are the cardinal Native-school subjects? (2.) What ought to be the limit to our expectations with regard to Native-school work?

The cardinal subjects—if there are such—are certainly those on which success in teaching the other subjects entirely depends. Now, Maori children who can read and speak English with fair fluency can learn arithmetic and geography just as well as European children can; these, therefore, may for our present purpose be considered quite secondary subjects. It might, perhaps, be objected that Native-school children cannot, in fact, treat the public-school standard arithmetic cards as well as European children can; but the truth of this statement would entirely depend on the knowledge of English possessed by the Maori children referred to. The truth is just as I have stated it: Maori children that know English do arithmetic quite as well as English children of