

The latest and perhaps most important principle that has come to light is that if Maori children are to thoroughly master the difficulties of the English language they must begin young. In a more practical form the principle amounts to this: that if children do well at the "preparatory" examination, and make a very strong pass in reading and English when they go through their First Standard examination, they seldom have any trouble in afterwards passing all the standards well. The reason for this is very obvious, but the principle took long to discover nevertheless. Generally it may be said, that if teachers put really hard and intelligent work into the first two years of the training of their scholars, they will be well repaid throughout the whole course for the trouble they have taken.

The adoption of these principles, which now seem quite simple and even obvious, has rendered frequent alterations in the code and changes in the modes of teaching necessary, as well as in the scope and general direction of our work. It must at times have seemed to the teachers that as fast as one difficulty was mastered by them a new one was discovered and set up in place of the old one, and that there was no finality; nevertheless, they have as a body followed the lead most loyally and heartily, and in numerous cases teachers have given hints and indications that have been of very great utility—have pointed out how another turn might be given to the screw! It seems to me that we have now secured a satisfactory standard of efficiency—that is, that the objects at which we aim are in the main what they ought to be, and that nothing more than changes in mere detail will be necessary. Such changes will tend to follow the success that we may achieve, and they will be of the nature of closer approximation to the public-school model, with probably a strong bias towards technical education. Indications may be seen in many districts of growing desire for such education.

It may be added that the Department has long given a kind of technical scholarships which have proved to be of a more or less serviceable character. There is, however, plenty of room for expansion in this important direction, and there are many indications of its being about to take place. Of course, such changes ought to be made with great care, and not to involve starting before one is ready.

It is, of course, one thing to have good aims and another to secure what is aimed at; but there is much real ground for satisfaction with what has been done. Table VII., given below, shows clearly to all who understand its structure that thirty of our eighty-eight village schools deserve to be called "very good," while eleven of these are excellent. Of the remaining schools a large proportion are doing solid work of one kind or another, in spite of some considerable drawbacks that prevent them from reaching the front. The cases in which radical change and improvement are urgently needed are but few.

To conclude, I may draw attention to a rather singular feature of our Native-school work; it is just this: Other educationists become more indispensable in proportion as they are more successful; we Native-school people become less and less necessary in proportion as we thoroughly succeed in performing the work that we have in hand. There is another peculiar circumstance connected with our teachers' operations: Although Native-school teachers are as hard workers and do as intelligent and certainly as noble work as any in the country, there is a tendency in some quarters to hold this work cheap, and even to look down upon the workers. But then, such views are not characteristic of those best qualified to have views on the subject, and so, perhaps, this little difficulty does not matter very much.

I have, &c.,

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