

English spoken, except at school. Further, the upper classes had apparently been listening to the work proceeding in the lower ones, and had thereby acquired the habit of speaking properly and reading correctly. In short, the method of instruction given in the preparatory classes had benefited at once the whole school.

Another pleasant sight also now more frequently meets the eye. If you ask the assistant teacher in most of the Native schools to give a lesson in reading to the preparatory classes, she will proceed with chalk and blackboard, and does not hasten, as formerly, to give out the reading-books. This is a sure sign of a great advance in method.

What I should like to have done now is a carefully thought out scheme of teaching reading to the infants which could be uniformly adopted in all the schools. It might proceed in some such stages as follows: (1) Short combinations of two letters, such as *an, en, in, on*, taught by "look and say"; (2) easy consonantal sounds taught in the easiest order, not the alphabetical order; (3) combination of (2) with (1) to form words of three letters, as *pin*; (4) harder consonantal sounds, such as *sh, th, &c.*; (5) combination of these with words already formed, as in *shin*; (6) vowel sounds, as in words like *boot*; (7) long vowel sounds, as in *shame*. A programme based on these lines would give sufficient work for a preparatory class for two years, and could be taught nearly all from the board. Indeed, there are at present no books suitable for this particular work in use in our schools, except the Adelaide primer, which is too short, though excellent in other respects.

Most of the pupils in the standard classes have read two books during the year, and I think there has been a fair amount of improvement in this respect throughout the schools. There were one or two instances where, however, it seemed clear that the reading had been confined not only to one book, but to certain pages of that book, and I can only express my deep regret at such a proceeding, which is quite indefensible. On the other hand, there are schools where the children seem to have cultivated the art of reading to such an extent that two books have been insufficient, and the teacher has applied for extra books, asking for any books that the Department may have in stock, however out of date.

The upper classes of our schools have got into the fashion of reading Nelson's Royal Crown Readers in preference to "Health for the Maori," while the lower classes seem to prefer these books to those formerly in general use and specially designed for Native schools. The fact of the Royal Crown Readers being illustrated, of course, helps to make them more acceptable. There have been this year a larger number of requests for story-books, in recognition of the supplying of firewood by the Committees, and the children thus make manifest by their choice of books the fact that they are improving in reading, and that they are acquiring a taste for reading—a very encouraging sign.

*Spelling.*—With regard to spelling, I can say with certainty that it has very much improved all round. Teachers who have found that their pupils were weak have given lessons in word-building with good result, and I hope by the time the present preparatory classes reach Standards III and IV to find a complete reformation in dictation and spelling.

In one or two cases I have taken written spelling in Standard II classes—an innovation full of awe to teachers accustomed always to oral work. But, as a matter of fact, oral spelling is practically useless, and our time in Native schools should be directed only to teaching what is educationally useful. I hope soon to be able to give written spelling or dictation to preparatory children; indeed, most of them can do this work now easily, recognising the various letters from the sounds when these have been properly taught. To show the calamity that is certain to ensue upon the purely alphabetical, or "*r-a-t, rat,*" method of teaching reading and spelling, let me give here a specimen of dictation from a boy in Standard III: "Auckland harpouir is very bretty and ship can ente it by day or night even went the whicer is quit ruff." Nothing can be done but to take such a boy back until he is able to recognise the letters by their function, and it is much more difficult to teach him than it is to teach an entirely new boy.

*Writing.*—The writing in our schools is now almost universally taught from the blackboard, and a fair amount of progress has been made. Some of our teachers still go to more trouble than is necessary by setting individual copies, instead of putting one copy on the blackboard and explaining to the whole class the points to be mastered. The teaching of writing in the infant classes, which is done mainly by the assistants, is, I think, on the whole more satisfactory than that in the upper classes, and some excellent work is done by the little children. Teachers should, however, endeavour to grade the work as much as possible: it is not at all desirable to teach the letters in the order of the alphabet; they should be taught in the order which is seen to be easiest.

In the highest standards I should like to see some attention given to the copying of invoices and accounts such as boys are likely to meet in country stores.

Further, I trust that greater care will in some cases be taken with the books, which should be kept free from blots and carefully collected after every lesson.

*English.*—I think the Department has every reason to be satisfied with the progress made in English in Native schools as a whole. Independent testimony to the same effect is given by the fact that in Te Aute College the two lowest classes formerly conducted have now been found unnecessary, owing to the better preparation of new-comers in English subjects generally.

Teachers are now appreciating the importance of the subject: due attention is given to it from the very lowest classes, and, indeed, the work of the preparatory classes is very good. I have to remark to teachers, however, that they should not expect too much at first from these lowest classes, and that here, as in reading, a graded scheme should be arranged. The following may serve as a suggestion as to order: (1.) Name of common objects in schoolroom, parts of body, clothing, &c.—*e.g.*, "That is a hat." (2.) The same with words marking distinction—*e.g.*, "That is my hat." (3.) The same with phrases indicating place, &c.—"The hat is on the slate"; "My hat is on the slate," &c. (4.) Plural forms. This would lead up to the requirements of Standard I.

Again I must ask teachers to be most careful in listening for imperfect or incorrect English from their pupils, and not to pass anything in the shape of an error. Also, I should like to impress upon both teachers and Committees the necessity for encouraging the children to talk