

GENERAL REMARKS.

Language-teaching (Oral and Written English).—Year after year it becomes necessary in the annual report to stress the extreme importance of this subject—particularly the oral English—in Native-school work, and efforts are made to enable teachers to realize that, since the prescribed medium of instruction in Native schools is the English language, the educational advancement of the Maori child depends upon his proficiency in speaking, in reading, and in comprehending English. The need for teachers to make themselves as proficient as possible in the work of teaching their Maori pupils to speak English is forced upon them when they undertake the task. The task of acquiring the new language is not an easy one for the child, and the task of teaching it is a problem for the teacher, in the solution of which he must understand the difficulties encountered by the child and must adopt methods intelligent in their aim and conception, and efficient in their application and use. The advantages of the direct method of teaching the language have been advocated, and a pamphlet has been issued by the Department for the guidance of teachers in the drawing-up of their schemes of work.

Although distinct progress in the teaching of this subject is being made in many of the schools, there is still a very considerable number of schools in which the work is of moderate quality only. In a large number of schools the work is very good, and in these schools there is also a correspondingly high standard of work in the other school subjects. The indifferent work referred to is clearly due to inefficient teaching, and not to the lack of ability on the part of the pupils, as teachers would have one believe. In schools that are separated by only a few miles the standard of work in this subject may vary very considerably. The schemes of work frequently indicates that teachers have hazy ideas regarding the teaching of oral English, and that they are unaware of the need for arranging their work in accordance with some definite system and method, and of devising suitably graduated exercises. The need for abundant oral practice by the pupils is not always appreciated by teachers, nor is it recognized that generally the more they talk the less progress in the use of spoken English the pupils make. In the preparatory divisions of the school, where the need for a careful and methodical treatment of the subject is particularly important, the language lessons should be taken by the most experienced and skilful teacher on the staff, and not by the inexperienced junior assistants. It is just at this stage in the instruction of young Maori pupils where much more time than is usually assigned on the time-table should be devoted to the subject of oral English. The written English is generally good in those schools where the oral English work has been efficiently dealt with.

Reading and Recitation.—In the majority of schools reading is successfully taught, and the pupils read intelligently, clearly, and fluently. They are also able to interpret satisfactorily the meaning of what they have read and to express the meaning in their own words. Ability to do this depends largely upon their knowledge and use of English, and it is in this respect that the effective teaching of English on the part of the teachers becomes very apparent. It is very important that every effort should be made by teachers to secure satisfactory comprehension of the subject-matter of the reading lessons on the part of the pupils, and to cultivate their powers of expression. There are still too many schools in which this aspect of "reading" is not satisfactorily fostered. A serious defect in many schools is the monotonous and expressionless reading that is frequently heard, and for this state of affairs the teachers are entirely responsible. The explanation seems to be that they either are unable to effect any improvement, or have come to the erroneous conclusion that Maori children can not be taught to read in any other way. At the same time teachers must carefully guard against training their pupils to speak, read, or recite in an unnatural manner, or, what is even worse, to perform these exercises in a key which is not the natural pitch for their several voices. It is satisfactory to note that efforts are being made to make the reading as wide as possible, and that with this object in view books are being provided for the school library and reading is being encouraged. In the preparatory divisions the adoption of methods recommended in the teaching of reading has resulted in rapid progress being made by the pupils. Additional reading-matter for the higher preparatory divisions, in the form of simple stories, was distributed amongst the schools during the year, and it is satisfactory to observe that good use is being made of the books supplied, and that the pupils are keenly interested in reading them. Recitation in many of the schools does not receive adequate attention.

Spelling and Writing.—These subjects receive very satisfactory attention in most of the schools, and the pupils do creditable work. In a very considerable number of the schools, however, the work is inferior, particularly in the spelling and dictation tests.

Arithmetic.—In a large number of the schools very creditable work is done in this subject, and where the pupils have a good mastery of English little difficulty is experienced by them in dealing with the official test cards for Standards V and VI. In the preparatory division of the schools many of the teachers still appear unable to deal with the composition of numbers as intelligently as is desirable, and it is noticeable that their estimate of their pupils' knowledge of number is based upon the manner in which the pupils can manipulate symbols. In schools where there are inexperienced junior assistants head teachers should take special care to secure a proper interpretation of what is meant by the composition of numbers. In a great many schools the value of mental arithmetic and *viva voce* arithmetic is not thoroughly appreciated.

Geography and Nature-study.—Only of a fair number of schools can it be said that the subject is well handled, and it is accordingly considered advisable to reprint for the benefit of teachers remarks made in a former report: "To be of educational value geography must not be regarded as a process by which certain facts about the earth, or the portion of it upon which we live, are committed to memory. In this the youngest child as well as the most advanced must be brought into contact with the outside world—the world of nature as distinct from the world of books. Although, as advance is made in the study, reliance to a great extent has to be made upon the investigation of others, still in order that these investigations may be understood children from the first must be taught to work for