

Native-school registers at the end of the December quarter. Table No. IV. contains statistics of the attendance during the year 1896. In Table No. V. there is as full information as can be obtained respecting the race of children attending Native schools. Table No. VI. specifies the results obtained at the standard examinations held during the year. In Table No. VII. the examination results are combined with those of an evaluation depending on estimates made at inspection. The kinds of results taken together form a basis for the computation of what is called "the gross percentage," and on this percentage the relative positions of the individual schools for the year 1896 are made to depend. Table No. VIII. gives the classification of pupils on the school rolls in December, 1896. Table No. IX. shows the average age of pupils when passing the standard examinations in 1896. Table No. X. gives the numbers of pupils attending Native boarding-schools, and of ex-Native-school boys serving their apprenticeship at the close of the year.

The total expenditure on Native schools for the year 1896 was £18,602 13s. Deducting £86 17s. 11d., paid from Native reserves funds; £1,760 18s. 6d., cost of boarding-schools, high-school fees, and apprenticing; £37 19s. 1d., travelling-expenses of children sent to boarding-schools; £3,039 4s. 8d., cost of buildings, fencing, furniture, &c. (including £1,000 from Civil List, Native purposes); University scholarships, £93 6s. 8d., we have a net expenditure of £13,584 6s. 2d. on Native village schools, as against £12,889 1s. 3d. for the previous year.

There has been little change in the age percentages for 1896 as compared with those for 1895. The most striking feature is that the children over ten are this year 47·49 per cent. of the whole; last year children over ten were only 45·57 per cent. of the whole.

The average attendance for 1896 was 2,220·25, as against 2,084 for 1895. The cost per head on the average attendance was £6 2s. 4d. for 1896, as against £6 3s. 8d. for 1895—a reduction of 1s. 4d. per head. The five schools that made the highest attendances were: Ruatoki, 98·11; Pipiriki (one quarter only), 96·30; Te Kaha, 94·00; Omaio, 93·83; and Mawhitiwhiti, 92·41.

Table No. V. shows a small increase in the percentage of children in whom Maori blood predominates. The percentage of Maoris and three-quarter Maoris was 76·41 in 1895; in 1896 it was 76·66. The percentage of half-castes for 1895 was 8·97; for 1896 it was 9·26. The quarter-castes and Europeans were 14·62 of the whole in 1895, as against 14·08 in 1896. There will probably be a great increase in the Maori percentage next year.

Table No. VI. shows a considerable increase in the number of passes—viz., 312. This increase is well distributed over the standards; the fourth, however, shows the least—viz., twenty-one. The total number of passes for 1895 was 942, as against 1,252 for 1896. In 1894 the passes were 842. The numbers on the roll at examination time amount to 2,812 for 1896, as compared with 2,569 for 1895.

The main results of the evaluation by inspection and examination conjointly have already been given—at the end of the detailed accounts of separate schools. The number of the schools that gained a gross percentage of over 70 was twenty-six for 1896, as against twenty-nine for 1895, and the same number for 1894.

Table No. VIII. shows a very satisfactory decrease in the percentage of pupils in the preparatory classes. Last year this number was 29·9; this year it is only 21·73. I learn that the corresponding number for the public schools is 24·9. But then the average age of passing Standard I. at public schools is eight years and eleven months, while with us it is, as shown by Table IX., nine years and ten months. Thus it is pretty plain that our percentage of preparatories *ought* to have been considerably reduced, always supposing that our First Standard is for our pupils as difficult as the public-school First Standard is for public-school pupils of similar age: it is intended to be.

At the end of 1896 there were seventy-three Government pupils at boarding-schools, as against seventy-seven at the end of 1895. There were twelve Government apprentices at the end of 1896, as against fourteen in 1895. Of these fourteen apprentices, three were learning to be blacksmiths, two to be carpenters, one to be a printer, three to be saddlers, and five to be farmers.

#### MISCELLANEOUS.

*Conference of "Old Boys" at Te Aute College, held during the First Week of February, 1897.*

Properly speaking, the account of this conference belongs to the report for the year 1897 rather than to that for 1896. But there is undoubtedly advantage in saying what has to be said on a subject before the interest in it has faded away through lapse of time. The following remarks will show how capable the young Maoris educated at Te Aute have become of realising the stern nature of the problems that must be solved by their people if they wish to avoid being rapidly swept away into oblivion more or less complete; leaving perhaps a few traces behind them in the shape of old fortifications and a few ill pronounced Maori names, or, it may be, a lingering tradition here and there of the great deeds of a lost race, remarkable for powerful physique, heroic bravery, and general mental capacity of a high order. Perhaps a few extracts and compilations from my report of the conference (written on the spot and while the impressions made were still vivid) will answer the purpose well. This will give no complete account of the work done, but at the same time the striking features of the meeting will probably be better brought out by a few sketchy general indications than by an attempt to cover the whole ground:—

"The proceedings were of a highly interesting and instructive character, and the various subjects dealt with were keenly and, for the most part, ably discussed. Besides the masters of the College and the inspector, about twenty representative 'old boys,' and two or three of the seniors now attending the school, there were present the Right Rev. the Bishop of Waiapu, the Ven. Arch-deacon S. Williams, and other clergymen of the diocese."

"Nearly every aspect of Maori life and activity was brought under review, and there was vigorous but appreciative criticism of pakeha efforts to improve the condition of the Maori. It