

Up to the present time promotion of children from class to class has depended upon an "individual pass examination" held by the Inspector. Teachers have, however, for some time been free to classify the pupils at their discretion, the Inspector examining each pupil according to the class in which he has been placed. This system has had, no doubt, many disadvantages. It has been irksome to pupils, teachers, and Inspector, the examination being often prolonged in the larger schools till evening, and we have no doubt that it has frequently led to apparently harsh decisions in which only the conditions present at the time were considered. It has also had the effect in many cases of checking a pupil's progress, as when the teacher did not promote any who "failed," a year elapsed before the child could try again to pass the examination. This, however, was not an unmixed evil, for in the times when salaries were affected by results, "passes" were apt to be aimed at rather than good solid education, and sometimes children passed who, the teacher knew, were not fit to be promoted.

But there were some points in favour of the system. It set a standard, and showed the teacher what was expected from him; it encouraged a spirit of emulation amongst pupils and teachers, and it gained the interest of the parents, to whom the "pass" was the hall-mark of the progress of their children.

Under the revised regulations the promotions will be determined upon the result of periodical examinations held at the end of each term by the head teacher of the school. In the case of the upper standards, IV, V, and VI, the old system will for the present be followed. In short, the Native schools are now to enter upon a modified system of freedom of classification. We feel that the proposed change is in the right direction; but teachers must remember, however, that freedom of classification imposes greater responsibility on them, and that the greatest care must be exercised in making promotions of children from class to class on grounds of merit and proficiency alone. It has been clearly demonstrated during the past five years that hasty promotion in the lower classes, especially from the preparatory division into Standard I, has invariably led to disaster in the higher classes, and the importance of a thorough foundation in the work of each standard cannot be too strongly urged.

Important changes in regard to the payment of teachers have also been made during the past two years. Prior to 1907 the salaries of teachers were liable to a considerable fluctuation, depending on the average attendance and the results of the examination. The scale of salaries introduced in 1907 brought an approximation to that provided in the case of teachers of public schools, and caused an increase of £3,650 on the total amount paid in salaries. Amended regulations have this year been issued by which teachers of Native schools are placed practically on the same footing as those of public schools. The increase in the total amount paid in salaries affected by the change is about £2,500—that is to say, to bring the salaries of the teachers of Native schools into line with those of public schools has meant an increase of £6,000.

The benefits have accrued not to those head teachers who under the old system were in receipt of good salaries, but to those who under the former scheme were the most poorly paid, and also to the assistant teachers, whose valuable work at length receives more adequate recompense.

Under the provisions of the Public Service Classification and Superannuation Amendment Act of 1908 all teachers of Native schools may now become contributors to the Teachers' Superannuation Fund, and share in its benefits in common with the other teachers in the Dominion.

#### MISSION SCHOOLS.

There are six mission schools engaged in the education of Maori children under the auspices of various denominational bodies. These schools are the Maori Mission School, Otaki; the Mission School, Putiki, Wanganui; Matata Convent School, Bay of Plenty; Waerenga-a-hika Mission School, Gisborne; Tokaanu Roman Catholic Mission School, Tokaanu; and Te Hauke Mission School, Hawke's Bay. These schools are inspected and examined by the officers of the Department, and their syllabus of work is in conformity with the requirements of the Native Schools Code. The total number of children on the rolls of these schools at the end of December, 1908, was 215, the average for the quarter being 179.

Some of these schools have reached a gratifying stage of efficiency, and the work generally is of a satisfactory nature. The discipline is good, and the teachers are zealous in the discharge of their duties. The attendance is not so good as it should be in all cases, and the want of local interest is manifest. In one or two schools we found, upon inquiry, that no committee or local visitors of any kind have been appointed, and the teacher receives no help or advice from any one, unless it be the Inspector. It has been remarked by visitors to the Dominion that the local interest in schools made possible under the School Committee system is one of the salient features of the scheme of education in New Zealand, and it is to be regretted that so valuable a factor is ignored by the authorities connected with the schools referred to. Apart from this, it is not right that the teacher should be placed in a position where the whole welfare of the school is dependent upon him.

During the year the school at Waerenga-a-hika has been reorganized, and industrial training will, for the future, form the principal feature of the syllabus of work there. An excellent opportunity is afforded here of offering practical instruction in all subjects that are likely to be of service to Maori boys, and this school will in future be regarded as a *secondary* Native school.

#### BOARDING-SCHOOLS.

There are six institutions which afford higher education to Maori boys and girls—viz., Te Aute College, Hawke's Bay; St. Stephen's Native Boys' School, Parnell, Auckland; Queen Victoria School for Maori Girls, Auckland; Hukarere Protestant Girls' School, Napier; St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Girls' School, Napier; and Turakina Maori Girls' School, Wanganui. To these have been added during the present year (1909)—the Native Boys' College at Waerenga-a-hika, near Gisborne; the Convent School, Otaki; St. Patrick's College, Wellington; and the Te Waipounamu College for Maori Girls at Ohoka, near Christchurch. The number of pupils on the rolls of the six first named schools at the