

Boys learn to distinguish between various grasses, and as most of them will be farmers they receive some rudimentary training in the theory of farming. The girls learn to cook and keep house, and are taught something of how to care for babies. They practise weaving flax baskets such as those used on the rare festive occasions when there is a tangi.

There cannot be too much praise for the white teachers, who have lived in the country and grown to treasure the dying customs of the Maori and hand them on to children, in song, dance, and legend. The number of Maori teachers is increasing, and this should do much to help the preservation of a distinct racial pride.

However, the system has faults from the point of view of a child, and only enormous effort and the passage of a century or so can remedy its defects. The English language is no longer alien, but the culture remains that of a superior race. Around the walls of the primers' class-room are pictures of a white Jack Horner, a white Humpty Dumpty, and white Bo-Peep, sitting amidst scenery that is like nothing the children have ever seen. They learn from books which tell of the adventures of white boys and girls. Are Maoris, then, too unimportant to be noticed? The arguments adults can advance against the changing of such a system would seem trivial to the child, who wants to identify himself with the characters in his books. Otherwise, the life he is leading and that described in print take place in two different worlds. The life of the pa and cow-shed he finds easier to understand, and often from infancy he becomes spirited and reads books unwillingly, feeling that they are not true representations of human experience. If in the future text-books are written by educated Maoris to cover the period from Primer I until about Standard II, the figures of the nursery rhymes will be Maori, without losing their essential identity, just as in the Chinese missions the Madonna and infant Christ are represented as Orientals. Geography and history, the other subjects concerned, have already had the emphasis moved so that the child can approach them with interest.

Discrepancies exist everywhere. A Maori girl compiling a scrap-book about a home has to use pictures of the sort of furniture she will never own, and fat smiling white babies. It may seem to her that the press of the country, sentimental enough when it remembers, does not recognize that the Maoris, too, have an everyday existence, and want to receive hints about wise purchases, tasty dishes, and sensible clothes for baby. It is, of course, the responsibility of the Maoris themselves to provide such services as a practical newspaper suitable for country readers, but meanwhile the situation is irritating.

The atmosphere of a Native school triumphs over the alien culture. The first pupils arrive about seven or half past, and the last around ten. Those who come on time travel in a special bus which has collected the children from miles about. It is usually dilapidated and overcrowded, and the pupils do almost everything but sit down and keep still. Sometimes whole families of up to four kiddies arrive on the back of a patient unsaddled horse, directed by a piece of old rope. Occasionally during the first lesson a boy falls asleep, because he has overtaxed his strength in his zeal to help his parents with the milking. Often lunches have been forgotten, and the gap is filled from a tureen of vegetable soup which has been cooked by one of the senior girls from ingredients supplied by the children.

Nobody knows who starts the fashions, but it is definitely "not done" to play marbles during the top-spinning season. Whole playgrounds are filled by children of all ages occupied in different versions of the same game, which may be for the day, and the day only, tip-and-run, which not a soul will play to-morrow. Two or three traditional Native games have survived and are played with the same zeal expended on imported relaxations. During class the children attend politely enough, reserving their greatest enthusiasm for singing in harmony. At the end of the day they tear away from the school-grounds with as much whooping and relief as their white brethren.