

doubt, been brought about by having all the sewing specimens sent to Napier and examined by three committees of ladies, who allot marks and report upon the general character of the sewing sent from each school. The prizes annually offered by Captain Russell of a sewing-machine, lady's workbox, &c., for the best specimens of newly-seated trousers, man's nightshirt, and darned pair of stockings, have greatly promoted the teaching of this subject under its various aspects, and, now that these prizes are to be awarded at the annual examination of the standard specimens of sewing, I anticipate still further improvement. The very suggestive reports of the lady examiners are appended herewith.*

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—Once more I have to express my regret that nothing has been done for the benefit of the ex-pupil-teachers who have now completed their term of service under the Board. This district is in great need of teachers experienced in school work, and for years I have looked forward to the time when young teachers trained in our best schools could be obtained to fill vacancies as they occur. There are now six ex-pupil-teachers, and after July next I anticipate there will be eight or ten more. A twelve months' or two years' course at a training institution would be the making of these teachers, if only suitable arrangements could be made for them to attend. The sum of £7,500 is voted annually for the special training of teachers, and, as this district employs one-twentieth of the pupil-teachers engaged in the public schools of the colony, it seems only just that a proportionate amount of the training grant should be employed in the training of our ex-pupil-teachers, for the benefit and advancement of education in this district.

Appended herewith are Tables A and B, showing the general condition of the schools, and the results of the standard examination for the past year.*

The Chairman, Education Board.

I have, &c.,

H. HILL.

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Blenheim, 19th October, 1882.

I have the honour to lay before you my report on the public schools in the Marlborough District for the year 1882. Twenty-four schools have been examined, at which 1,145 scholars were present on examination-day. The number on the rolls at the same time was 1,359, the number in 1881 being 1,247. The time at my disposal during this part of the year did not admit of my visiting Kekerangu, which would have involved the loss of six days; but this school will be examined in March next. I have seen no reason to alter the favourable estimate that I formerly gave of the tone and discipline of the Marlborough schools. In the rare instances where the order is not as perfect as might be desired, extenuating circumstances—such as overcrowded and inconvenient schoolrooms—are not wanting. I have still to regret that more than two hundred children should have thought fit to absent themselves from the examinations. An inspection of the table giving the number on the roll, as compared with the number present at examination, will show at once to which of the schools these defaulters chiefly belong. It is impossible to make a general statement that shall be equally or approximately true as to the degree of success with which the several subjects included in standard work are being taught in a number of schools, each of which differs widely from the rest in some point. I will endeavour, nevertheless, briefly to summarize my impressions as to the quality of the work in this district.

READING.—The reading on the whole is quite as good as can be expected, when the extremely limited time for practice in this subject that is at a teacher's disposal is considered. All that the best teacher can do is to put his scholars in the way of reading so as to be understood. The children and their parents must do the rest. Scholars who get no more instruction or practice in reading aloud than the little that can be given in school hours—and even that little from a single well-thumbed set of class-books, often almost got off by heart—can hardly be expected to read with much taste or expression. Much may be done by encouraging the older children to read aloud the newspapers at home. The multifarious reading contained in even the dullest local paper will afford better practice than class-books, which offer but little variety.

WRITING.—Writing is, on the whole, better taught than it was formerly; but, although downright failures are very few, the work still, to my thinking, falls far short of what can be accomplished by no extraordinary amount of skill and pains. Even now I cannot call to mind more than four schools in which the handwriting throughout is as good as it ought to be. A few picked specimens of neat penmanship by the older scholars will not compensate for the slovenly work of the rest of the school. I observe that several teachers do not put copy-books into the hands of their scholars until they have passed the First Standard. But the school-life of most children is too short to permit the postponement of this stage of the work until a scholar is between eight and nine years old. Little fault can be found with the spelling, comparatively few scholars being unable to stand the tests applied.

ARITHMETIC.—But it is in arithmetic that the work is least satisfactory, the number of failures in this subject outnumbering those in all the other subjects put together. And two-thirds of these are what I class as “total failures”—that is, the candidate could not work correctly more than one of the six or seven sums set; or, in a large majority of instances, not so much as one. The arithmetic is, as a rule, far too loose and inaccurate. Most of the scholars, and, as it would appear, some of the teachers, seem quite content with mere approximations, and even the older scholars generally break down in the easier questions from this cause. A striking example of this was given in the work of the Fourth Standard, where one of the questions set was a simple account, consisting of only four items, any one of which might easily be reckoned without the help of a slate. More than a third of those who attempted this sum brought up wrong answers. And yet I have certainly not attached too little weight to this subject in my examinations, as I have invariably rejected a scholar who fails in arithmetic, however good the rest of his work may be. Incorrect arithmetic is absolutely worthless.

GRAMMAR, ETC.—Formal grammar is fairly taught in almost every school: composition is more