

“school life” with much greater pleasure if more thoroughness in a few subjects were demanded from them instead of superficiality in the many. Too many subjects of instruction, except in large schools well and ably staffed, are fatal to the employment of intellectual methods in teaching, and I am satisfied that much harm is now done to the children and to education generally by its being supposed that teachers of all sorts and conditions are able to give instruction in any and in every subject which it is deemed necessary to have taught in the schools. This view of the education question is quite overlooked at present. Teachers themselves know and recognise their defects in certain subjects, but they show their capacity to teach in other ways, and one can hardly blame them for certain defects in their work, as their own knowledge cannot always be rounded off to meet the requirements of the syllabus. It is, indeed, curious to observe how thoroughly at home some of the teachers are in some of the “additional subjects,” and in those of the class subjects, like elementary science and object lessons, which they are able to select for themselves. This part of the standard course is better prepared on the whole than the pass subjects; and, although the results do not count towards the standard passes, one cannot but appreciate the efforts of those among the teachers who select the additional subjects as much for the good of their pupils as to show their own special knowledge and skill in teaching them. In quite a number of schools singing is very well taught, and the musical skill displayed by some of the children—notably at Napier, Hastings, Hampden, Waipawa, Gisborne, Makatoku, and, in a less degree, at Kaikora, Wairoa, Waipukurau, Danevirke, and Woodville—is very creditable to the teachers who give instruction in this subject. In twenty-nine schools recitation was taken as an additional subject, and in some of the smaller schools I have been at times agreeably surprised at the proficiency of the children. Indeed, I have seldom listened to better recitation than was given by the children at Porangahau, Gisborne, Makatoku, Waipawa, Napier (Standard VI.), Waipukurau, and Matawhero (Standards V. and VI.). I can only account for the improved results generally by supposing that the greater attention which has been given to reading during the year has also aroused more interest in recitation among the children and the teachers. Sewing continues to be taught with much success by the lady teachers in a large majority of the schools. At the November examination twenty-nine schools were represented, and 1,075 standard specimens of sewing were separately examined and marked by the lady examiners, who for years have worked to promote the efficient teaching of this important subject. I suggested a year ago that sewing should be made an alternative subject with drawing for the girls. I still think that something should be done in this direction, as the large amount of time spent in sewing by the girls demands some consideration beyond a mere nominal allowance in the standard examinations. Physical training does not at present receive sufficient attention in this district; indeed, there is hardly a school outside Gisborne where the boys and girls receive instruction—not to say systematic teaching—in gymnastics and calisthenics. Elementary drill is taught; but Napier, Gisborne, and Waipawa are the only schools where anything like efficiency has been reached. The employment of a drill instructor for a year or so, to visit all the schools, would, no doubt, arouse the teachers to a greater sense of the importance of elementary drill as an aid to discipline; and, should the funds at the Board's disposal permit of such an appointment being made, I venture to hope that the suggestion thrown out will be adopted at no distant date.

In concluding this report, I am pleased to state that the discipline and general management of the schools continue to improve. The majority of them are in the hands of earnest and conscientious teachers, whose chief aim, I believe, is to improve the moral equally with the mental condition of their pupils. In fact, the close of no previous year has promised so well for the educational welfare of the district; and I am certain of this: that the School Committees throughout the district will not be found wanting in helping forward the good work which so many of them have hitherto done so well, and for which I beg to offer them here my special thanks.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

H. HILL, Inspector.

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Picton, 17th March, 1887.

I have the honour to lay before you my annual report on the public schools in the District of Marlborough for the year 1886.

Twenty-eight schools, with a roll of 1,627 scholars, have been examined, the increase in numbers since last year being ninety-two. There were 1,481 scholars present, the number of absentees from examination decreasing steadily year by year.

A reader unacquainted with the geographical peculiarities of the Marlborough District would at once be struck with the largeness of the proportion of very small schools on the list. Thirteen of the twenty-eight schools count among them only 238 scholars, even taking all the names on the roll, which gives no more than eighteen to each school, or, taking the average attendance, barely fourteen. The unavoidable waste of teaching power consequent on this state of things both diminishes the efficiency and increases the cost of education in Marlborough; but, from the physical conformation of the district, and the nature of the occupation of many of the inhabitants, there seems to be no help for it but to maintain a large number of thinly-attended, comparatively costly, and, from the nature of the case, not very efficient schools.

It is to be feared that the elaborate tables of figures attached to this report, which are the outcome of the new regulations, will prove a stumbling-block to all but the initiated few who have made this matter a special study. The figures as they stand certainly do not tell their own tale to the cursory reader, and, indeed, are apt to mislead even the careful. It seems, then, to be well worth while to explain the real import of the new method of tabulating “passes,” “failures,” “exceptions,” and “percentages.” The term “presented” does not mean, as might at first sight