

be able to make better selections for the smaller appointments. Again, teachers are classified by the department in nine ranks: when appointments to the more important positions are being made would it not be advisable to hold only those eligible for selection who hold the higher grades of certificates, and to submit only the names of those to the Committees? Some direct stimulus ought to be given to teachers to qualify themselves for the higher grades of certificates.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Education Board, Auckland.

WM. FIDLER, M.A., Inspector.

3. MR. AIREY'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Auckland, 16th February, 1889.

I have the honour to submit my report on the work of the schools in the Central Division of the Auckland District for the year ending the 31st December, 1888.

There are in this division fifty-eight schools. Of these, I have been unable to visit for examination two small half-time schools at Huia and Whatipu; and the school at New Lynn, which was opened during the year, has not yet been examined. The accompanying table shows the results of the examination of the remaining fifty-five schools, five of which were examined by Mr. O'Sullivan previous to my beginning work at the end of March. I consider the results of the year's examinations to be on the whole satisfactory. Much of the work shown was of very good quality; and the number of schools is small, and the schools themselves comparatively unimportant, from which the results have been wholly or in great part unsatisfactory. While I think thus well of the work in the aggregate, I have observed some weaknesses which I now mention under their different headings.

READING.—In Standard I., Standard II., and to a less degree in Standard III., a good deal of what is called reading is no proof in itself that the children are able to read; it is virtually reciting. The reading work has been got up by heart, and I have often doubted whether children who read with great fluency from their regular book would be able to read even fairly well sentences of not greater difficulty, but which they had not previously seen. This, I think, can only be remedied by a wider range of reading matter in the lower classes. This would probably be objected to by parents on the ground of expense; but it would remove much of the difficulty which is found in getting the children of Standard IV. and higher classes to read fluently and intelligently.

SPELLING.—Writing from dictation is well done in most of the schools; but I have been surprised to find frequent errors in the spelling of common words in the composition and other papers sent in.

WRITING.—Copy writing I have found very good, but there is often a marked want of neatness and care in the other written work.

DRAWING.—A good deal of energy will be required in some schools to prepare the higher classes for the next examination in this subject.

ARITHMETIC.—This subject has been on the whole taught very satisfactorily. What weakness exists is in problem work. Want of an intelligent comprehension of the question and ignorance of the proper process to apply more often causes failure than want of accuracy.

GRAMMAR.—Better grounding in Standard III. and Standard IV. would much assist the teaching of grammar in the higher classes. Composition is often poor in matter. This is caused, I think, by want of observation on the part of the children. Science and object teaching ought to be a great help to good composition.

GEOGRAPHY.—New Zealand geography in Standard III., and mathematical and physical geography in Standard V., are not often taught to my complete satisfaction. A good many teachers appear to depend upon antiquated text-books and atlases for their geographical knowledge of this country. Insignificant villages are magnified into important towns, and it is not a rarity for children to tell me of towns which never had any existence, but which have been marked on old and inaccurate maps of the colony. From Standard V. I rarely get good answers about the motions of the earth, the seasons, &c. So long as this part of geography remains in the syllabus as a portion of Standard V. work some pains should be taken to give the children some clear notion of the earth's movements and the phenomena arising therefrom, as well as a knowledge of the real significance of such terms as "meridian," "zone," &c.

ELEMENTARY SCIENCE.—The amount of science taught and the quality of the teaching vary very much in the different schools. Some teachers have gone to considerable trouble and expense to provide suitable apparatus for illustrating the lessons; others are satisfied with mere book work, and in a good many schools no attempt is made to teach elementary science except what may be contained in the "Laws of Health" or "Lessons on Temperance." In some schools I have been pleased to find that without any special apparatus teachers have well illustrated their science lessons by reference to the common phenomena of nature which may be observed by all.

OBJECT LESSONS.—The general treatment of this subject is one of the least satisfactory in the whole course. Many teachers fail to understand the real aim of object teaching. They laboriously construct lessons from information got from books which the children will in course of time be able to read for themselves, but material for observation which lies at every schoolhouse door is in the main neglected. Lessons are given on the oak and palm, while the children cannot distinguish between the appearance and use of kauri and puriri, which are growing close by, and of which the very building in which the children are is constructed. It is the same with animals, manufactures, and other things. The observing powers of the children are not cultivated by the methods of object teaching which generally prevail.

In the matter of inspection I have been quite unable to overtake the work. Nine schools were inspected this year by Mr. O'Sullivan before my appointment; I have since been able to inspect only twenty. Thus there remain twenty-nine schools which have not been inspected during the year. I can conscientiously say that this omission of inspections is not due to any apathy on my part; as I have spared no labour to visit as many schools as possible. For this reason I have