

GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION.—As a standard subject grammar and composition occupy an important place. In Standards III. and IV. the grammar was examined orally, and a special test in composition was afterwards given; it being possible for pupils to obtain half marks in each division of the subject. In the highest standard the pupils in their paper tests gave evidence of having been carefully instructed, but too much time appears to be given to the analysis of sentences and too little to paraphrasing.

The class and additional subjects continue to receive much attention, and in many schools they are taught with commendable success. A vast amount of poetry for repetition and recitation was prepared for the examination, and I am inclined to think that this will form a most valuable store for pupils in their after lives. The memorising of the noblest thoughts of noble minds must tend to encourage those who will have little time for reading after leaving school, and, although the elocutionary effects are sometimes poor, the seed that is being sown is of good quality. Singing is well taught in a number of the schools, but perhaps the most marked improvement in the additional work is in drill and calisthenics. Teachers are beginning to appreciate the benefits to be gained by the systematic instruction of the boys in drill, and of the girls in calisthenics, and in several of the principal schools this phase of school training has lately received special attention. The Napier School Committee some months ago engaged Sergeant-Major Huddleston, of the Napier Volunteers, to instruct the town children in drill and physical exercises, and the progress up to the date of my visit to the school was very marked.

SEWING.—Judging by the reports of the lady examiners the sewing in most of the schools is of a high order of merit. It is needless on my part to say that the lady teachers deserve much credit for the efficient manner in which the subject continues to be taught. Personally I should prefer to see more attention paid to patching, darning, and mending in Standards III. and IV., and in the highest standards it would be well if arrangements could be made for special instruction in cutting-out and in the use of sewing machines. Sewing is a subject in which specialisation for instruction and training can be fully carried out, and already this form of specialisation has been introduced into one school with excellent results.

Instruction in elementary science is popular in most schools, but there are few teachers who are really capable of teaching the subject well. Nor is much encouragement held out by the Board to those who are fond of science and who are experts in some special branch or subject. There are no scientific appliances provided for the schools, with two or three exceptions, and teachers who take up physics or elementary chemistry are required to purchase their own appliances. This is a subject which calls for consideration by the Board. Makatoku, Napier, Ormond, Danevirke, Hastings, Kaikora, Gisborne, Woodville, Ormondville, and Norsewood are the only schools where elementary science is really well and intelligently taught.

MORAL TRAINING.—I regret that I cannot express full satisfaction at what may be termed the moral phase of training in certain schools. It is a phase of training too often overlooked, because, like reading and arithmetic, it cannot be measured by percentages; but no part of school work should be more jealously guarded by School Committees. Moral training is permanent in its effects, and if this aspect of school discipline is weak the whole educational fabric will be of little value. There are things which, in themselves, are not wrong, but which on the part of teachers are not at all times becoming. Appearances are very important as a factor in training, and it is for this reason that I do not think it by any means a proper thing for teachers to be seen smoking in and about a school; nor should hotels be the places for teachers to frequent. Such matters as these may appear to some as of trivial importance, but it must be asked what will be the possible effects upon the rising generation when such things are common? Men must learn to discipline themselves before they can discipline others without the employment of force, and it is in this phase of school keeping, I regret to say, there is room for improvement and watchfulness.

In conclusion, I am pleased to again record the fact that the Committees, with few exceptions, continue to take an active and intelligent interest in the welfare of their schools. As a rule, representatives from each Committee meet me on the day of examination, and they show in many ways their desire to carry out efficiently the duties imposed on them by the Education Act. I am convinced that much good to the cause of education in this district is done by their instrumentality.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

H. HILL.

NELSON.

SIR,—

Nelson, 31st December, 1890.

I have the honour to submit to you my report on the Nelson public schools for this year.

Ninety-four schools are now at work, several of which have been opened quite recently. The rolls contained 5,714 names when the schools were examined, 5,303 being present. The absentees from examination, 411, were far too numerous. The number of scholars on the roll at the close of the December quarter was 5,831.

On the whole, there is substantial reason for being satisfied with the work that has been done in our schools during the past twelve months. It is true that in some schools a large proportion of the pupils have proved unequal to the demands made upon them on examination day; but, from a careful observation of what was going on during my visits of inspection, and on other sufficient grounds, I have no reason to conclude that more than a small fraction of such schools as have done badly on this occasion owe their ill-success either to the indolence or to the incapacity of their teaching staff. Under a system where weakness in any one of seven subjects is, of necessity, branded as “a failure” in all, much allowance must be made for the element of chance, especially