

in 1888. The opening of new schools might be expected to increase the roll-number to at least the extent of the average attendance; but it usually happens that some of the scholars have been attending other schools, as at the Haast and the Waiho, the children of which schools were previously taught at Okuru and Waikukupa respectively. Rather unexpected results followed the opening of some of these small schools. The teachers appointed to the Kawhaka and Callaghan Schools were both former pupils at the Goldsbrough School, and their parents are still living in that locality; but upon taking charge of their respective schools they removed the younger members of their families (to the number of nine in all) from the Goldsbrough School. A teacher was also appointed to the Rangiriri School who had also been a pupil at Goldsbrough, and she took away with her three children; so that the attendance at Goldsbrough has been diminished altogether to the extent of a dozen, and the cost of educating these has been thereby doubled. The object aimed at in such cases is partly the securing of some companionship in these solitary situations, and partly the extra capitation gained, to the extent of £5 each per annum. It is not easy to suggest a remedy for this, as the salaries that would be payable to teachers for the ordinary average attendance would be too small to secure the services of male teachers of good character; and female teachers cannot be expected to live by themselves in such lonely situations.

The number of scholars presented in Standards I. to VI. this year was 1,075, or about 64 per cent. of the roll-number. Including Class VII., the percentage of the roll-number above Class P was 66½ per cent, a falling-off of about 1 per cent. on last year's figures. The number of scholars absent from the examination this year was about 3 per cent. of the roll-number, and 5 per cent. of the number presented in standards; or about 2 per cent. in each case less than last year. The number of passes recorded this year is 828, or 80 per cent. of the number actually examined in Standards I. to VI.

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Having now handed over the charge of the district to another Inspector, I desire to leave him as much as possible, unbiassed by any adverse criticism of particular schools, leaving only the bare tabulated results to indicate, in conjunction with the "Inspection Reports," the effective condition of each.

As before mentioned, the marks for mental arithmetic, which have hitherto been "bonus" marks, were this year recorded separately, and the subject was treated as an independent pass-subject. This has had the effect of showing more clearly where this very important branch (if indeed it ought not rather to be called the root) of arithmetic has received any amount of intelligent attention.

In writing I notice a marked improvement since the introduction of the "Southern Cross" copybooks, especially in those schools where the subject is properly taught in class, and with plenty of blackboard illustrations; but even in one or two schools where the scholars practically teach themselves the use of these books has led to a much more satisfactory style of writing. The slight falling-off in the subject already referred to as resulting from a severer test would, I am convinced, have been much greater but for the introduction of these copybooks.

The remark in my last report about the danger of a "little knowledge," as shown in the attempts at derivations, seems to have had some good effect, as this year there were very few "random shots" in this part of the grammar paper. The composition, on the whole, exhibits some improvement; the letters of the Fourth Standard were less formal and stereotyped in their beginnings and endings than formerly, the neatly-written address is too frequently absent, it being often crowded up or down into a corner.

Reading continues to be very fairly taught in most of the schools, the smaller ones, being able to devote more time to individual practice, often come up to the best of the larger schools; but in the First Standard the reading may really be better described as recitation, the children being often able "to read" as well with closed books as with open. I have frequently tested this standard by causing the children to read from a book not used in the school; and I think this should always be done, unless it be possible to insist upon two reading-books in this and the Second Standard.

The recitation is also as a rule satisfactory, and particularly so at Ross, Woodstock, Hokitika, and Stafford. At the last-named school the upper standards had got up one of "Park's School Debates," the one selected being that on "Compulsory Education." The scholars were arranged on "Ministerial" and "Opposition" benches, with "Mr. Speaker" to keep order; and the debate throughout was conducted with much spirit and expression. In some schools little or no attention appears to be given to the sense of the pieces recited; a lamentable ignorance of the meaning, for instance, of the expression "noble slain" (in Mrs. Hemans's "Graves of a Household") was given as "workmen;" and this is only one of a number of similar answers to questions on the subject-matter of the piece "specially prepared" for recitation.

As regards class and additional subjects, I have merely recorded the results obtained; and, excepting the larger schools, I consider that the time spent in attempting some of these subjects would be more profitably employed, as far as the scholars are concerned, in acquiring a thorough mastery of the remainder of the programme. I cannot bring myself to brand as idle or incompetent the teachers of small schools, who have made no pretence of attempting every subject of the syllabus, if they have evidently done good work in those which they have undertaken.

Judging from the reports of other Inspectors, I fear I shall be regarded as unorthodox and old fashioned in holding this opinion. In a report which has just reached me, one of the oldest and most experienced of the inspectorate has expressed an opinion that the number of subjects now demanded under the Government regulations need not be felt as oppressive by the teachers, "as an examiner who knows his business will always make allowances in proportion to the quantity of additional matter exacted."