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NEW ZEALAND

EDUCATION:
REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

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Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

AUCKLAND

SIR,— Education Office, Auckland, 28th February, 1895.

I have the honour to present the usual report for the year 1894.

In the course of the year there were in operation 328 schools, or twenty more than at the close of the preceding year. Three hundred and sixteen of these were examined in the course of the year Of the twelve that were not examined, six were opened during the last quarter, two (both small aided schools) were opened about the middle of the year, two were temporarily closed when the schools in the district were examined, and the remaining two (situated at Great Barrier Island) it was found impossible to overtake.

Two hundred and ninety-nine schools were inspected. Of those not inspected, twelve were opened after the time available for inspection had passed, and sixteen could not be overtaken. It will be remembered that the work of inspection was delayed and interrupted by the attendance of the Inspectors at the Conference of Inspectors, held at Wellington early in February, and by attendance at the office in connection with inquiries ordered by the Board. But for these interruptions the inspection of all the schools in operation up to the middle of the year could have been easily overtaken.

In the schools examined before the 1st of July the examination results were tabulated in the form that has been in use for a number of years. Since that date the results have been set out in the form lately prescribed by the Minister For the sake of uniformity, the results of the first half of the year have been thrown into the same form as was prescribed for the second half. The percentages of passes and failures that formed so prominent a feature in the statistics of previous years have now been eliminated, and exceptions have also disappeared—a change which no friend of education need deplore.

The following table shows in summary the examination results for the year :—

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	273			
Standard VI.	1,179	1,134	870	14 11
" V	1,943	1,829	1,251	13 6
" IV	2,971	2,819	1,839	12 8
" III. ..	3,600	3,421	2,628	11 5
" II.	3,689	3,546	3,069	10 2
" I.	3,482	3,314	3,063	9 2
Preparatory	8,277			
Totals	25,414	16,063	12,720	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

For the year there has been an increase of nearly 1,000 in the number of pupils presented, and a somewhat larger increase in the number of pupils that passed in standards. Last year 15,213 pupils were presented in standards, and 11,650, or 76·5 per cent., passed , this year, 16,063 were

presented in standards, and 12,720, or somewhat more than 79 per cent., passed. The percentage of pupils that passed has thus risen 2½ per cent. since last year The improvement thus indicated is, however, more apparent than real, as head teachers have this year passed a good many pupils in Standards I. and II. who would not have been passed by the Inspectors, while during the latter part of the year pupils who in former years would have failed because they did badly in one subject have been allowed to pass. So far as mere statistics carry us, the condition of the schools seems to be much the same as it was last year The subjects in which the great majority of the failures occurred were dictation, arithmetic, composition, and geography

The mean of the average ages has risen by two and a half months, and the ages at which the several standards have been passed are higher in every class except Standard II. In Standards VI. and IV the advance has been considerable (seven months and five months respectively), and cannot be readily accounted for

The class-subjects now include grammar, history, science, and object-lessons in all classes, and geography in Standard II. The results in these are classed as "good" in 24 schools, "satisfactory" in 97, "fair" in 125, "moderate" in 66, and "inferior" in 3. Additional subjects are more satisfactory, the results being "good in 60 schools, "satisfactory" in 151, "fair" in 90, and "moderate" in 14. In one school, owing to very special circumstances, no work in class or additional subjects was presented.

The number of pupils over eight years of age who were not presented for Standard I. was 1,754, a somewhat smaller percentage of the total number on the roll than that of recent years. The reasons assigned for the backward condition of these pupils were with few exceptions satisfactory, so far as persons not intimately acquainted with the circumstances could judge.

As I have not yet seen any large number of the schools of the district, I cannot express any very general opinions on the intelligence, accuracy, and thoroughness of the teaching, but I may be allowed to lay before you a few general impressions, gathered from my experience of the schools which I have visited or examined. I should be glad to believe that these impressions would have been favourably modified by a wider knowledge of the Board's schools.

Various indications point to the prevalence of a considerable want of intelligence and of educative aim and purpose, both in methods of teaching, and in the direction of study Among these the abuse of model or pattern reading may be noticed first. It is a very common practice to give model reading with every paragraph of a new reading-lesson, the assumption being that pupils cannot read the sentences with satisfactory readiness and expression without such assistance. But, for pupils who are fairly abreast of their work such direction and help should be needed only occasionally If they are really necessary for every sentence and paragraph, the fact raises a strong presumption that there is something seriously amiss in the management and teaching. It practically means that the pupils are engaged on work for which they are not ready, and with which they cannot deal in an educative or intelligent spirit. If they were prepared for the lessons on which they are engaged they could handle them readily enough, without all this help and coaching. In reading no less than in other subjects we want to get our scholars out of leading-strings as soon as possible. To encumber them with help that they can easily be trained to do without, can do nothing but harm, for it stunts the spirit of self-help and self-reliance, which it is one of the chief aims of education to foster and develop.

Evidence to the same effect is afforded by the brief, fragmentary, and badly-constructed answers that are so generally and so complacently received. This unsatisfactory answering is, no doubt, partly traceable to a want of varied and skilful questioning, but it seems mainly due to the slight importance which teachers attach to training their pupils to give full answers, stated in clear and explicit terms. No one objects to short answers where short answers are sufficient. But in skilful questioning, questions that cannot be answered in a word or two are constantly given, and from an early stage the pupils should be trained to deal adequately with these. This training, so valuable and necessary, seems to be much neglected. Careful attention to it cannot fail to greatly improve the education given in the public schools.

It is, however, in the teaching of the earlier stages of grammar that the disregard for educative aim and purpose specially shows itself. The teaching here has appeared to me singularly mechanical and uninteresting, and to fail almost wholly in developing the fine logical training that a skilful handling of the subject is so well fitted to give. In my view, every lesson in elementary grammar should afford exercise in the clear interpretation of the language used, and in precise reasoning from it. At every step mere guesswork should be excluded by the adoption and habitual use of methods that are incompatible with it. The basis of all teaching of the subject should be a thorough understanding of the meaning of the sentence or passage under consideration. To secure this understanding a careful examination of the contents of the sentence, in the shape of a rough logical analysis of them, should be undertaken first of all. This will show and, if necessary, discover and teach the full meaning of what is to be discussed. The use or function of each word, or of certain cardinal classes of words, can now be readily worked out, when the words can be referred with certainty to their proper groups or parts of speech. The rough analysis above referred to is nothing very formidable, as the name might perhaps suggest. It means nothing more than pointing out for each sentence "what we say something about," and "what we say or affirm about this person or thing", in other words, the "subject" and the "complete predicate," and in longer sentences pointing out further the statements which the sentence contains. The terms "subject and "predicate" should not be used at first, but they are so convenient that they may be introduced as soon as pupils fully understand what they denote. Any intelligent handling of grammar must, I consider, be based on some such procedure as is here sketched. To attempt even the simplest parsing of an easy sentence without a thorough comprehension of its sense can lead only to guesswork—a process antagonistic to mental training of any kind, yet it is work of this character that passes for the teaching of grammar in Standards III. and IV in nearly all the schools with which I have yet come in contact.

If simple parsing is to afford constant practice in precise reasoning, the use or function of the words dealt with must be brought into the foreground, and be stated fully and clearly To class a word as a noun without further explanation may or may not be an exercise in reasoning, according as the pupil has or has not in his mind a sound reason for his answer But to class it as a noun because it is the name of a person or thing, which the pupil defines as well as he can, is an exercise of this kind. Obviously, at this stage, the pupil's reason for assigning a certain word to a certain part of speech is the chief point to be considered. If this is true it is sheer stupidity not to require him to state his reason. It is this alone that raises the exercise out of the sphere of guesswork. And the reasons given should afford evidence of thought and understanding, and not fall into a stereotyped formula, such as "Dog, a noun, because it is the name of something", "Yellow, a noun, because it is the name of something." The pupils can, and should, be trained to define with some precision what is named "Dog, a noun, because it is the name of an animal," and "Yellow, a noun, because it is the name of a colour" They can do this readily for the great majority of the nouns they meet with, and the exercise not only stimulates observation and thought, but lends much greater interest to the lesson. So handled, the grammar-lesson ceases to be a mechanical grind, and embodies intellectual elements of no mean value. Similarly clear and definite statements of the use of the words should be required for each part of speech. Thus, it is not enough to say of a pronoun that it stands for a noun. The very word or person it stands for should always be stated in the earlier stages of instruction, and wherever the sense of a sentence is understood this can be done without difficulty Precise reference of this kind is all-important, for it is this that alone gives meaning and tangibility to the highly-generalised definitions which little children are often taught too soon, and which they are apt to repeat without thought or understanding. Once more, it is not enough to class a word as a verb because it says or states something, or means doing something (a remarkable definition favoured in some schools) The very person or thing it says something about must also be stated, if the answer is to show any apprehension of the meaning of the sentence. These are now deemed very minor matters but careful attention to them is indispensable if the teaching of the elements of grammar is to contribute anything of value to the mental discipline which our schools are established to promote. So far as I can judge, the grand aim in the handling of grammar in Standards III. and IV has too long been to get the pupils to pass a formal and undiscerning examination, and not to turn its study to the best account in training and enlightening the mind

Another important aspect of this subject is also undeservedly neglected. From the earliest lessons in grammar consideration of the structure of easy regular sentences, and of the linking of two or more statements into one sentence, should be kept prominently in view This should be done for the mental discipline which the exercise yields, but chiefly for its evident utility as an aid to composition. In the latter subject the pupils of Standard IV., and even those of Standard V., show a marked uncertainty about the proper division of the matter of their exercises into sentences. The best means of surmounting this difficulty lies in the systematic study of the structure of the easy sentences that should alone be chosen for parsing in the lower classes. This study may well be begun at Standard III. stage, easy sentences being chosen for consideration. And Standard IV pupils should be regularly trained to separate or distinguish the statements that compose each sentence, and to point out the words that link or join the statements together—the 'joining words," as they may be collectively named, without at first distinguishing the classes into which a more refined analysis divides them. Regular practice in exercises of this kind not only helps parsing by making clear the function of conjunctions, of relative pronouns, and of relative adverbs, but it soon gives the pupils a fairly ready and sure knowledge of the limits of sentences. Without this knowledge blunders in the division of sentences can hardly be avoided. It is by the help of some instinctive grasp of it that pupils do as well as they do. How much better would they fare if the blind groping after guiding principles were replaced by a clear appreciation of them, derived from deliberate and consciously directed study

Evidence of like purport to that already adduced might be drawn from the teaching of geography, history, and comprehension of English lessons, but there is no need to elaborate it. In this connection I shall mention only one other point—the historical dates taught in Standard III. class. These are often learned in the most mechanical way, without any knowledge of the events that make the dates notable, or even of what a date means. The date of the battle of Bannockburn, for example, is very commonly taught and nearly always known but as likely as not no one in the class knows in what country Bannockburn is situated, or what combatants took part in the battle. It is, however, chiefly in small schools that such work as this is met with but, grossly unintelligent though it is, we must not think too hardly of their teachers even for such failings, for they are not without reasonable excuse—the excuse that the burden of work prescribed for such schools is so heavy that it is practically impossible to find time to teach some of the minor subjects in an intelligent way An educative study of any subject demands a certain minimum amount of time, and if this cannot be found teachers should not bear too much of the blame if they do resort to cram. At the recent Conference the Inspectors recommended that history should be taught only as reading-lessons are taught, without any special examination on dates and facts—an arrangement that would have greatly relieved the pressure of work incident to the present syllabus. Unfortunately the recommendation has not been accepted by the Minister

A second impression left on my mind is that the progress of the preparatory classes is not so rapid as it might be, and that their teaching is wanting in breadth and thoroughness. The slow progress of these classes is no doubt due to various causes. In large schools it seems traceable to indifferent attention, caused by the unwieldy size of the classes in which the beginners are usually taught, and by their being spread over so large a space while the lessons are being taken. Beginners in reading are best taught in small groups of fifteen or at most twenty, and they should always be brought out to the floor for their lessons, as the children can in this way be trained to give close

attention with much greater ease and success. The floor-lessons will be short (say, fifteen minutes, or at most twenty), and will seldom prove wearisome and exhausting, as lessons to much larger classes are apt to do. At this stage the training in proper attention to the lesson is in every way as important as the training in knowledge, and the routine of teaching should aim at compassing both. I suspect that a certain want of thoroughness contributes largely to the slow progress made by these classes. Before a book is left pupils should be quite familiar with all the words that occur in the lessons, a result to be secured only by regular revisal of back lessons, and, if desirable, by a rapid re-reading of the whole book. In some cases the beginners are taught by pupil-teachers in an unskilful way For this the teachers in charge must be held responsible, for with good direction pupil-teachers readily learn to do routine work of this kind with very fair and often with marked success. In the smaller schools the preparatory classes suffer because the teachers concentrate their efforts mainly on the standard classes. To neglect the work of the beginners is, notwithstanding, one of the gravest blunders a teacher can make, for the want of a good grounding at the bottom of the school course creates friction that endures for years, and greatly enhances the difficulty of securing efficient work in several of the lower standard classes. It is here, above all, that the hurtful effects of frequent changes of teachers make themselves felt, for if a teacher expects to leave his present school in a year or two he will usually be less careful to labour for a reward that may be reaped by his successor and not by himself.

It is especially in arithmetic (counting and adding) that the teaching of the preparatory classes is wanting in breadth and thoroughness. Counting, under which I include numeration and notation up to 100, is seldom clearly taught and addition is for the most part not taught at all in any proper sense of the term, though numberless exercises in it are set. The result is that the pupils up to Standard III. seldom have a ready or thorough knowledge of addition and subtraction, while an immense amount of time is wasted in learning—painfully and imperfectly—what, with proper arrangements, should be thoroughly mastered before the work of Standard II. is entered on. In my opinion, the teaching of this subject in the preparatory classes should give pupils about to be advanced into the Standard I. class a ready command of counting up to 100, of the addition of numbers up to 9 and 9, and of easy oral subtraction. Until this is accomplished, multiplication tables should not be touched. Nothing in the schools has surprised me more that the every-day sight of pupils in Standard III., and even in Standard IV., habitually counting on their fingers, or by dots or units in some disguise or other, without which aid they could not cast up a column of eight or ten figures with reasonable quickness and accuracy This state of affairs is anything but creditable to the teachers and the official directors of education, and it certainly carries with it its nemesis in the shape of a vast amount of unnecessary labour, discouragement, and drudgery to nearly all concerned.

There is but one way known to me of getting children to add readily and accurately, and that is the daily teaching of, and oral drill in, addition tables and easy exercises in the preparatory classes. The work must be almost wholly oral, and when slate exercises are set they should never require a knowledge of addition results that the pupils have not already mastered. If this condition is not carefully observed, the practice of counting on by units in some form or other must be resorted to, as in no other way can the pupils work out results that they do not already know The thorough teaching of addition really presents no difficulty for teachers who care to take trouble and persevere. Table-grinding is, no doubt, uninteresting and disagreeable work, but no good teacher will neglect it on that account. When the results are firmly fixed in the memory a great deal has been achieved pupils are in a position to make rapid and easy progress, and both they and their teachers are more free to concentrate attention on other and less mechanical acquisitions.

The last impression I need here notice is that in many schools the attention is not what it should be. This seems due in large measure to the way the pupils are spread over the floor, as a consequence of the dual-desk organization. For all oral lessons I think it most desirable that the classes should be concentrated, as far as possible, immediately in front of the teacher At such lessons—which include reading, recitation, grammar, geography, history, object-lessons, and science—three pupils could easily sit at each desk, and the whole class would thus be brought into focus, and made more amenable to the teacher's eye and voice. In support of this, which struck me the first day I saw a class being taught at dual desks, I am glad to be able to cite the favourable opinion of one of the highest modern authorities on education, Dr. J G. Fitch, till this year Chief Inspector for England. He says, "The dual desk has this enormous advantage that, whereas it gives plenty of room for the writing-exercises of two, it suffices for three scholars when listening to a lesson, and it enables the teacher to draw the pupils closer together" It is strange that teachers have so commonly neglected to avail themselves of this palpable advantage. The wide diffusion of the units composing classes is not, however, the only cause of the inattention noted, but I shall not now attempt to specify the others.

Reading is by far the most important of the subjects of instruction in the elementary school A young person who has learned to read easily, and who understands what he reads, can go on and add to his education in nearly every direction except mathematical study He then holds in his hands the key to an almost boundless range of higher knowledge, and the means of entertainment for the term of his life. If we fail to give our elder pupils the power of reading readily and with understanding we fail in the major part of education. Great importance is thus rightly attached to success in teaching this subject. So far as I can judge, our success in dealing with it still leaves much to be desired. This is especially true of the large body of pupils who complete the compulsory course of education, and leave school on passing Standard IV These, I believe, rarely gain any ready command of reading, and still less do they understand the matter Pupils who pass through the six standards are in a much better position. As a rule they can read any book of ordinary difficulty with very fair ease (I have tested this in a number of schools), though they do not show much grasp of the meaning even of the books they have read at school. Our failure to give pupils who

leave school on passing Standard IV a satisfactory command of reading will not, I think, be disputed by any one conversant with the facts of the case. It seems due in part to the ease and simplicity of the lower reading-books now used in the schools, still more to the want of a sufficiently wide training in the subject, and in some considerable degree to faults of teaching and management. That the narrow range of the reading now overtaken in most schools is a chief cause of this failure is clearly shown at our visits of inspection, when we see the painful process by which fairly fluent and correct reading is secured with much labour by the close of the school year. It is then no unusual experience to find the pupils of the lower classes quite unable to deal with the higher books into which they have lately been advanced with anything like reasonable power or ease. The books, simple though they are, are clearly beyond their reach. Though the pupils get through them after a fashion they are not ready for them, and have little or no interest or satisfaction in trying to master them. Reading thus proves a slow and disheartening process, and what should naturally be the pleasantest and brightest of school tasks comes to be regarded with indifference. The cause of all this difficulty is obvious enough. At the lower stages we fail to give such a thorough and extended training in reading as will insure reasonable ease and readiness in dealing with the books to be taken up at the next stage. This is clearly the root of the difficulty To surmount it, all your Inspectors agree in thinking that the Board should step in and insist on wider reading in the preparatory classes, and on the thorough preparation of two books in each of the standard classes. There would be nothing arbitrary or harsh in enforcing this course. The very books now used have been specially prepared for a system of education under which two books must be read in every Government-aided school throughout England, and three in every similar school throughout Scotland. Is it to be expected that even a good knowledge of half the reading matter that is deemed indispensable in the Mother-country will suffice to give our children a ready command of the reading that should be mastered at each stage of progress? No one can expect anything of the kind. Parents do not want their children merely to read a certain series of simple school-books. They want them trained to read and understand the newspaper, the magazine, books of travel, biographies, histories, novels—everything, in fact, that they may desire or need to learn about. Teachers cannot make bricks without straw any more than others, and they cannot give this training in reading without adequate materials for practice and exercise. If this were understood and realised as it should be we should hear little about the difficulty of getting pupils provided with a sufficient number of reading-books. Continued reluctance or neglect to provide these can, if necessary, be met here, as it is in the Mother-country and in some parts of this colony, by authorising the Inspectors to test the reading by an unseen book, wherever the prescribed amount of reading has not been overtaken. We have the remedy for our failure in this matter in our own hands, and must bear the blame if we shrink from applying it.

Teachers may be inclined to think it impracticable to overtake this additional work, but this impression is quite a mistake. If their pupils were really ready at each stage for the higher books, they would go through them with an ease, rapidity, and satisfaction that would make the thorough learning of two books a far easier and pleasanter task than the learning of one now proves. I know this from the experience of many years, and a reasonable trial will soon convince any unprejudiced person of its truth. It is, indeed, already done without difficulty in certain schools, both large and small.

The want of an adequate grounding in easy reading at the lower stages of school life also tends to make the teaching of it mechanical and unintelligent. So long as pupils cannot deal readily with their daily lessons, teachers are almost constrained to adopt methods of treatment in which artificial forcing and mere sentence-grinding predominate. This is largely the cause of the prevalent abuse of model-reading adverted to above. The difficulty of making out and saying the mere words throws attention to the train of thought of which they are the vesture too much into the background, and makes the work as unfruitful of mental enlightenment as it is wearisome and disheartening. From the point of view of true education, the gain from a more thorough training in reading at each stage would be hard to overestimate.

How far faults of teaching aggravate the difficulties caused by a narrow range of reading I am hardly yet in a position to say In the larger schools they probably do not do so to any great extent, though abuse of model-reading seems more common in these than in others. Still, it is certain that many teachers do not bestow on the subject the care and attention it deserves. The time allowed for it is generally insufficient, and is not turned to the best account. Above all, the pupils do not have sufficient practice in reading, especially in the smaller schools. Interruptions for trivial corrections, for explanations better deferred or withheld, for showing graces of rhetoric, for bringing up a nice point in grammar, for calling somebody to attention, for fifty trifling reasons, are incessant. The continuous reading through of a long paragraph is seldom heard, of a whole lesson never In large classes, simultaneous reading, with or without the teacher's accompaniment, is probably the best way of giving the practice required. This should come at the close of the teaching, and after individual reading has been practised as fully as time permits. In small schools the same method is useful, but it must be supplemented by sending the classes to a lobby or porch, under a monitor, for further practice. Moreover, so far as I can judge, the attention during reading needs to be braced up in schools of every class. Every pupil should be closely following the words which the individual reader utters. They should be mentally reading all the time. The teacher would not do wrong who insisted on seeing mute movements of the lips, in token of genuine attention by every pupil. Mistake-hunting needs to be checked, as it distracts attention, and leads to much waste of time. Good attention can easily be maintained without this undesirable aid if teachers throw living spirit and enthusiasm into their work. On the whole, I cannot but attribute a large part of our failure to teach reading well in the Standard IV and lower classes to indifferent attention and the want of a hearty spirit of work among the pupils.

I am heretical enough to think that a good deal of time is almost wasted in straining after superfine reading. Readiness and accuracy are the qualities we should chiefly aim at securing. Natural expression will usually follow in their wake if the matter be fairly well understood. He who reads easily, and understands what he reads, will rarely fail to have his imagination stirred by the scene brought before his mind s eye, or to give vocal evidence of his appreciation of it. This natural display of feeling is far better than the artificial substitute worked up at such pains and cost of time.

The difficulty experienced in so many schools of securing distinct, natural, and expressive reading is mainly due to faulty training at the beginning of the school course. The pupils here are allowed to say the words one by one, without grouping them into simple phrases, and, of course, without any approach to natural expression. Where this style of so-called reading has been practised for a year or two a thoroughly bad habit is formed and engrained, which it costs years of labour and of worry to correct. By insisting on distinct natural reading from the first all this could be spared. I hold that from the earliest lessons of their easiest book pupils should be trained to read in a natural way From the first they should be accustomed to group the words in little phrases, and to modulate the voice as they habitually do in talking. Reading of this kind is easily secured, provided teachers take pains to make the little scholars familiar with all the words before the reading is attempted. For this the words, and not the sentences, must be the units of instruction. Where large reading-sheets are available, which is practically everywhere, the words can be thoroughly worked up before reading with perfect ease. When little books are introduced the difficult words should still be worked up first of all. Any teacher with a trifle of ingenuity can devise better means of doing this than the stupid practice of reading sentences backwards, which bestows as much attention on the simplest and best-known words as on the most difficult and unfamiliar A good plan is to have the hard words neatly printed on the blackboard before the lesson begins, when they can be readily worked up. A quicker plan is for the teacher to read over each sentence or paragraph distinctly, and then have the difficult words pointed out by all, and worked up by spelling and saying. With adequate preparation of some such kind an easy and natural style of reading can be secured without difficulty Such work as this is best taken with the classes standing on the floor, and the teacher need not be afraid of getting behind the pupils to see that all are pointing to the correct words. I would lay it down as a fundamental principle in teaching the reading of the younger classes that the difficult words should be adequately worked up first of all. Without such preparation they can only prove traps and stumbling-blocks in reading the sentences. While pupils have to stop every now and then to puzzle out an unfamiliar word fluent and natural reading is plainly out of the question.

Explanation of the language of the reading-lessons is often unsatisfactory Its consideration is now restricted by the time and effort needed to overcome the mechanical difficulties of reading. If these were lessened the training in comprehension could easily be improved. But ready reading is more important than even comprehension, and should not be sacrificed for it. No doubt pupils understand fairly well much that they cannot state precisely in other words.

Recitation is for the most part very fairly done, and is generally well known but the meaning of what is learned is often enough ill understood. Unless they are very short, three poems should be enough to learn. They should be chosen for their worth, and ought to be mental treasures for a lifetime. Not a few of the poems one hears recited are mere rubbish.

In spelling there has been little improvement on the unsatisfactory work described in last year's report. It is little, if at all, better taught in some of the larger schools than in small ones, where defects are so much more excusable. The time devoted to this subject appears to me more than ample for teaching it well. Where time can be spared for it, the mistakes (corrected, of course) should be put on the blackboard and thoroughly taught, and teachers would do well to make out lists of them for revisal. Blundering in constantly-recurring words, such as "there" and "their," is very common. Our failure to teach spelling better seems to me to indicate a serious want of good attention, and of the moral influence and control that teachers should exercise over their pupils.

In the great majority of the schools writing and drawing are taught with very considerable success, and they are well done in many The work in exercise-books is also neat and careful. The correction of these exercises cannot, however, be commended. It is intrusted too much to pupil-teachers, without sufficient supervision from those in charge.

Arithmetic is for the most part done slowly and with insufficient accuracy in the lower classes the upper ones show much higher proficiency in it. Mr Dickinson recognises improved readiness in dealing with problems. It is, however, in the mere manipulation of figures that pupils fall short. The cause of this, and the great blot on the teaching of the subject, is the widespread, the nearly universal, failure to teach addition thoroughly in the preparatory classes and Standard I. The backwardness in adding and subtracting, so prevalent here, are unknown in most of the other districts of the colony, and we cannot banish it too soon. The questions used in testing the arithmetic during the greater part of the year were supplied by the Minister Like all questions, they did not please everybody but they were, on the whole, fair and suitable tests. The Standard VI. questions, however, took more time to do than can well be spared on a busy examination-day Mental arithmetic was, on the whole, poorly done. With the imperfect training to add, it could hardly be otherwise.

The work in composition of Standards IV and V was disappointing in quality and quantity Here Standard III. did fairly, and Standard VI., on the whole, creditably The prevailing faults in Standards IV and V were a great dearth of matter and inability to divide what there was into sentences. To improve composition three things are needed—a selection of subjects about which pupils have a sufficient range of knowledge (geographical and most historical subjects are quite unsuitable), a better command and understanding of language derived from wider reading, and regular study of the structure of sentences and their sequence in paragraphs. At least one exercise

a week should be criticized and corrected as a class-lesson at the blackboard. When errors are marked, pupils should be made to see why the expressions objected to are wrong. The weekly class-lesson might with advantage be afterwards written out as a home lesson in an exercise-book, so that the whole series would be available for examination by an Inspector or an interested visitor In many schools only about a dozen subjects were submitted for the year's work, this would represent less than one exercise in three weeks. The experiment of testing the composition of Standard IV by the reproduction of a short pointed story has not as yet met with much success. The pupils not rarely failed to see any point in the stories, and set down a few confused fragments without sense or point. This kind of test will be continued during the present year, I hope, with more success. It is known to answer well at this stage in the Mother-country I should perhaps add that the stories were read out twice by the usual teacher of the class, whose voice and manner would not disconcert as a stranger's might. Probably nothing will help to improve the power of composing more than the wider reading that can be overtaken, and seems so desirable, in the classes below Standard V

Grammar is now everywhere a class-subject, and has not gained in importance by the change. In my judgment, it has been handled in a very mechanical and unintelligent spirit in Standards III. and IV In the two higher classes it has usually been taught with greater intelligence, though not always very thoroughly In Standard IV the distinguishing of all the parts of speech is all the parsing prescribed in the syllabus, and all that will for the future be expected of this class. Full reasons for the classifications given will in every case be expected as part of the simple parsing. The knowledge of the inflections to be taught in this class will be tested apart from the simple parsing, with which there is no need to combine it. In the upper classes too much stress is apt to be laid on a ready knowledge of the minutiæ of complete parsing. A knowledge of the nature of the distinctions which grammatical terms denote is of at least equal importance. But more valuable than all this is the ready recognition of the clauses or statements that compose sentences, and of the connecting words that link them together, and a clear understanding of the positions in which words, phrases, and clauses can be best placed to express the writer's meaning with clearness and force. This knowledge, which is of the greatest value for composition, does not receive anything like the attention it deserves, nor is the training in it taken in hand as early as is desirable.

A large number of failures has to be recorded in geography These seem due to the inadequate answers which are commonly accepted in this subject, and to a lack of variety and testing power in the ordinary run of questions that are set by teachers for their pupils to answer in writing. Physical geography in particular was poorly known. Outline maps were almost the only point one can commend in this subject. Standards II. and III. were distinctly better taught than the higher classes.

The effective teaching of history needs more time than can be allowed for it in most schools. It is seldom well taught, and, as a rule, is hardly fair Its being a class-subject makes pupils and teachers somewhat indifferent about it. The great fault of the teaching is its meagreness. To rouse interest in, and give any real knowledge of, great historical events and personages some fulness of treatment is indispensable. Without this the whole remains unintelligible, and, at most, a few isolated facts are barrenly remembered. If we may judge from the small proportion of pupils who are ready to answer when teachers examine their own classes there seems to be but small success in interesting the children in the subject. I am afraid that the selection of topics is not always made with very good judgment, especially in the Standard III. class. Even in the highest classes most important events are frequently overlooked. The vast and far-reaching consequences of the genius and inventions of James Watt and George Stephenson, for example, are seldom touched on, and their names are often not even mentioned. On the other hand, second-rate events and episodes, such as the trial of Dr Sacheverell and the Crimean war, are accorded a prominence which they do not deserve. The best thing teachers can do in teaching history is to give their pupils a lasting interest in the subject. Such text-books as "Nelson's Brief History" or "Creighton's Shilling History" will hardly help to do this. A dry condensed record of the most prominent facts repels rather than attracts. The recent school-books rightly give more and more prominence to the biographies of great men, and it is a public misfortune that the subdivisions of the subject prescribed for the various standard classes here and in the Mother-country are so discordant that none of the recent English series of class-books of history can be advantageously used in our schools.

The teaching of science also suffers from the small amount of time that is available for it. One lesson a week is what is commonly given, but this is insufficient for any serious study of the subject. In some of the larger schools more time is devoted to these lessons, but, so far as I can judge, with inconsiderable success, except in a few cases. The answers to the science papers set at the last Junior Scholarship examination fully bear out this opinion. A good deal of what is taught under the name of science is inaccurate and unsound, especially in physiology and laws of health. School class-books are far from being free from faults of this kind, and I suspect that teachers frequently draw their knowledge from books that are antiquated and behind the age. Even the laws of health in the London Science Series contains a number of views that are now completely discredited. In connection with physiology, numbers of technical terms are learned that only doctors need to know, these properly belong to anatomy and not to physiology In agricultural science a fair amount of useful knowledge is gained in a good many rural schools. In my opinion a great deal of unimportant and unintelligible chemical detail is introduced into the lessons on this subject. Dr Fream's excellent and cheap "Elements of Agriculture"—a book that should be in every teacher's hands—shows sound judgment in dealing with this part of the subject, and teachers would do well not to enter into the mazes of agricultural chemistry more deeply than this high authority If the farmer does his part in honest culture, he may rest assured that Nature will not forget her chemical lore, whether he understands it or not, or fail to render him her wonted service. The introduction of a better text-book than the very indifferent one now used in the

schools would do much to improve the teaching of the subject. To teachers who desire to become acquainted with a better handling of it I can recommend the "Principles of Agriculture," by W T Lawrence, published at 10d by Messrs. W and R. Chambers. It is somewhat surcharged with chemical lore—clearly stated, indeed—but is otherwise an excellent elementary textbook, and well up to date. For some reason or other the biological aspects of agricultural knowledge, though more interesting and intelligible than the chemical, are less dwelt on.

Singing is often very fairly taught, but the practice of it is too much confined to the formal lessons given once or twice a week. More or less singing should form part of the daily routine of school work. A verse or two of a favourite song, sung just before or after morning and afternoon intervals, would help greatly to relieve the monotony of the routine of lessons. And in the preparatory classes singing might well be introduced with even greater freedom. Marching into and out of school to the accompaniment of song seems to find no favour with us. Somehow, singing seems to be done under compulsion as it were, and not from delight in it as a joyous and cheering exercise.

Before closing this report, I must record my appreciation of the valuable service rendered to the Board by Mr James Grierson, who acted for a large part of the year as temporary Inspector. He discharged his duties with conscientious care, and did much to infuse an intelligent spirit into the work of the schools which he visited.

I have, &c.,
D PETRIE, M.A., Chief Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland.

TARANAKI.

SIR,— Education Office, New Plymouth, 5th February, 1895.

I have the honour to submit my report on the schools of the district for the year ending the 31st December, 1894.

The schools were inspected, and all were examined, excepting those opened for the first time during the year, and the school at Tarata, at which there was no attendance owing to the bad weather on the examination day The schools whose returns were not shown in my last report were examined in the first half of the past year In future the annual examinations of those schools will have to be made in that part of the year, and it is not unlikely their number may be added to.

The following summary shows the results of the examinations for the whole district :—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	5			
Standard VI.	72	70	37	14 1
" V	210	199	69	13 7
" IV ..	365	342	177	12 11
" III.	523	504	316	12 0
" II. ..	517	491	429	10 7
" I.	502	479	417	9 10
Preparatory	1,331			
Totals	3,525	2,085	1,445	12 2*

* Mean of average age.

In the schools examined, 2,194 were presented in the standards. Of this number, 109 were absent on the day of examination, and 1,445 qualified for promotion. Comparing these numbers with last year's, the passes show a slight decrease of 1½ per cent. The attendance is 2 per cent. higher. There being no returns from the schools not examined last year, the presented number in the standards appears to be unusually greater. The large increase, also, of the number of pupils on the school registers, which at December reached 3,637—an increase of 279 on the previous year—will explain the difference in the totals of both years. The mean of average age is higher by one month, this is, however, the consequence of the higher average age in Standard I. The bad roads and wet weather are doubtless accountable in a great measure for the high average age in some schools. At the same time there are cases in which the parents are blamable for much of the irregularity of attendance in this class.

As a whole, the examination results for the year are satisfactory In a few subjects there has been a tendency to drift, but I fear the foolish notions of some teachers who rely on their ability to prepare their pupils for all the likely ruts the Inspector may take have had more to do with the teachers' want of success than they imagine.

Recent admissions and irregularity of attendance are the reasons given by teachers for the non-presentation in Standard I. of two-thirds of the pupils over eight years of age in Class P I am satisfied the reasons assigned by the teachers are satisfactory At a small school I found sixteen excused as not sufficiently advanced, but the teacher's written statement, which I quote, speaks for itself English is spoken here only in school, and even then only during the lessons, so that during nineteen hours out of the twenty-four only the mother-tongue of the several nationalities is in use."

Pass-subjects.—Reading continues to improve. I must say, however, that in some schools the teacher does not aim at any standard of quality beyond what he thinks will meet the requirement for a pass. With the object of fostering a desire for reading amongst the pupils, copies of suitable and interesting books prepared for class reading have been procured for distribution among the schools, and it is to be hoped that these books will be effectively used, and be the means of encouraging the majority of the pupils to read more than they do.

The dictation tests have been as well answered as formerly but I cannot speak so favourably of the preparation of the spelling-lessons, which I am certain has fallen away from its former creditable position. The sooner the new regulation confining the tests to dictation alone in the senior standards is rescinded the better will it be for the efficiency of the preparation of the scholars in this subject.

A number of the writing tests are by no means equal to those of past years. There can be no doubt the supervision is not always what it ought to be. Many of the tests done for me were wanting in careful detail and finish, while occasionally the ill-formed letters and the crowded and cramped treatment, along with a poor style of setting out the work, showed weak methods and an absence of energy in the teaching. An exhibition of the good and bad work done during the year might have some good effect in levelling up its quality and treatment in the future.

The test cards in arithmetic supplied by the department have been well answered by Standard III. Standards VI. and IV did not do so well, and Standard V., whose work in the subject has been the weakest for years past, did very indifferently In a few of the schools the preparation, judged by the results, could have been treated in only a very imperfect way It may be the number of problems in each card was the cause of an almost total breakdown in one or two schools. At any rate, the results show the folly of trusting to the slipshod treatment which this subject, as well as composition, receives at the hands of those teachers who attempt to teach without a step by step thoroughness of preparation. I purposely avoided the distribution of the previous year's examination cards, in the hope that the subject would be more liberally treated.

In composition very good work was more frequently met with than formerly Wherever systematic supervision was coupled with the instruction the results were forthcoming. Indeed, in many instances the fairly creditable work of the year testifies to the degree of proficiency attained in not a few schools. I cannot, however, report on the paraphrasing in favourable terms. The work in Standard V was not even moderately well done by the majority of the scholars.

Some weakness was evident in the geography of Standard IV This may be the outcome of the short time teachers had to prepare for its treatment as a pass-subject. The work in Standard V was a decided improvement on past effort. The successful preparation of physical and mathematical geography is still confined to a few schools whose teachers really take an interest in the subject. In general the answering, however, is too meagre to be of any real use.

The examination of Standards I. and II. by the head teacher has done little to lessen the Inspector's work of examination. It may do so in districts where the schools are large, but, with so many small ones, I would rather, when an opinion has to be expressed on the preparation of these classes, the old system of examination by the Inspector had continued. I fear there will be discontent before long among the teachers, as all do not take the same care or exercise the best judgment in promoting their pupils. The Inspector should have power to prohibit the promotion of any scholar whose advancement is not deserved. Occasionally there were evidences of less care than there has been in the past in the instruction of these standards. The effects of this neglect may appear in the results of a higher standard in the year now entered upon.

Class-subjects.—The instruction in grammar may be said to be confined to the work done in Standard III. and to a few schools where the teaching of the subject in the other standards is honourably attended to. History continues to receive a fair share of attention, and frequently the interest shown during the oral examinations is a proof that the subject is popular In Standard II. geography has very seldom been reported as unsatisfactory Object-lessons on common things are given regularly to the lower classes, and lessons on elementary science or the principles of agriculture to the higher standards, but too often the questioning fails to train the children either to describe what they see or to draw their own conclusions. The schemes of lessons should aim at the imparting of connected information through a systematic arrangement for the year. Very often the lessons are given without visible illustrations or apparatus of any kind. To some extent this defect may now be overcome, as, in response to a request made to a number of the principal manufacturers of the Home-country a variety of specimens, illustrating raw materials and their manufactures into textile and other fabrics, have been supplied, in most cases gratuitously The specimens, several of them in handsome cases, will be distributed to the larger schools as centres from which they may be loaned as they are required. Longmans' "Practical Mental Arithmetic" has been of much real service in the district. It has directed the teaching out of the stereotyped grooves of the past, and laid a good foundation in a number of schools.

Additional Subjects.—Military drill and the exercises of the Swedish system are taught in a few schools with very satisfactory results. The teaching of singing is confined to the larger schools, in two or three of which part-singing is exceedingly well done. Sewing is specially reported upon by the ladies' sewing committee. The comprehension of the language of the reading-lessons is frequently but scantily treated. This work should take a higher place than that in which it is classed.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to thank the teachers for their co-operation and good feeling, which have largely contributed to whatever success has attended my labours in the guidance and control of the educational work of the district. And now, after eleven years' service, during which the standard examination work, as shown by the number of passes, has more than doubled itself, I ask for my successor that support and confidence which the Board has at all times given to me.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, New Plymouth. WILLIAM MURRAY, Inspector

WANGANUI.

SIR,— Education Office, Wanganui, 20th February, 1895.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending the 31st December, 1894.

WORK OF THE YEAR.—The Conference of Inspectors was held in Wellington early in February. Then followed the preparing of the usual report and the statistical returns required by the Minister of Education. The inspection of the schools, the examination of pupil-teachers, and of candidates for scholarships, and the standard examinations, were conducted in the usual manner. Some of the schools now are so far back towards the interior, so difficult of access, and so far away from each other, that the time spent in getting to them, and inspecting and examining them, is out of all proportion to the numbers on the school-rolls. The majority of the inspections were conducted in the first half, and the majority of the examinations in the last half, of the year The preparation of questions for the pupil-teachers', scholarships, and standards examinations takes up a great deal of time yearly During the past year the questions in arithmetic for Standards III. to VI. were for the first time drawn up by the Education Department, but we saved little time through this, as we considered it best for facility both in correcting the pupils' papers and in showing methods, to work out all the questions. Also, as some schools were examined in the earlier part of the year, before the departmental cards were issued, we had ourselves to make out a certain number of sets of arithmetic questions. New regulations for the employment and the examination of pupil-teachers and new regulations for scholarships also entailed a considerable amount of trouble and time.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS, ROLL-NUMBER ATTENDANCE.—At the close of the school year 105 schools, including two half-time schools, were in active operation, while two other schools, Awahou and Ongo Road, had been closed for over three months. For the last quarter of the year the average weekly roll-numbers were Males, 4,889, females, 4,470 total, 9,359. And the strict average attendances were Males, 3,849; females, 3,517 total, 7,366, the highest ever yet reached. The working average for the same period was 7,454, or eighty-eight higher than the strict average.

For the four quarters of the year the mean average weekly roll-number was 9,264, and the strict average attendance 7,136, showing the satisfactory increases of 455 and 602 respectively The latter number means a very considerable increase in the amount of the Board's capitation grant. The strict average attendance for the year expressed as a percentage of the weekly roll-number is 77. This is just 3 per cent. higher than it has been in any former year, and we are very pleased to see such a marked improvement. It is possible that, if rolls were more frequently purged of useless names, the percentage might be still higher The working average for the year is only 133 higher than the strict average.

EXAMINATION OF SCHOOLS.—Of the 105 schools open at the end of the year, ninety-six were examined in standards. Of the remaining nine, Mount View and Glen Nevis had been closed for a considerable time during the year, and seven were new schools, none of which had been open for a sufficient time to warrant their being examined. On the days appointed for the examination there were 8,998 pupils (4,719 boys and 4,279 girls) on the rolls of the ninety-six schools examined, of whom 5,851, or 65 per cent., were presented in Standard I. to Standard VI., 3,091 were in the preparatory classes, and fifty-six had already passed Standard VI. The number on the rolls and the number presented in standards are higher than in 1893 by 1,167 and 714 respectively, every class, Standard VI. excepted (same number in both years), showing a substantial increase. It must, however, be remembered that, as nine old-established schools were not, on account of epidemics, examined in 1893, these figures do not indicate as large increases in the roll-numbers and the attendance numbers as would at first sight appear. Of the 5,851 pupils presented in standards, 5,532, or 94 per cent., attended and were examined, 319 were absent, 1,366 failed, and 4,166 passed the requirements and were promoted. Of the absentees, some had already passed a standard during the year either in this district or in another district. By the new regulations percentages of passes and percentages of failures are not acknowledged, so we have not calculated them. "Exceptions" (pupils who failed to pass their standards, but had not made half the possible attendances during the three quarters prior to the examination quarter), too, have been done away with, so the numbers in the failed column have risen considerably, as they include such pupils as under the old regulations would have been classed as "excepted."

The following table summarises the results for each standard and for all standards in the district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
					Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	56				
Standard VI.	255	239	103	136	14 3
" V	488	469	179	290	13 8
" IV	970	896	310	586	12 9
" III.	1,272	1,194	352	842	11 9
" II. ..	1,431	1,367	233	1,134	10 6
" I.	1,435	1,367	189	1,178	9 4
Preparatory ..	3,091				
Totals	8,998	5,532	1,366	4,166	12 0*

* Mean.

The number of schools examined in one standard or more was ninety-six.

Preparatory Classes.—In the schools examined there were 3,091 children in the preparatory classes, or 34 per cent. of the pupils on the rolls. Of these 3,091 children, 778, or 25 per cent., were over eight years of age. Feilding School was responsible for far the greatest number—viz., sixty-six—but the majority either had not been at school for two years or had attended very badly. Hawera came next with thirty-six, twenty-four of whom had been under two years at school. Of the other large schools, the numbers at Terrace End and Campbell Street in Palmerston, at Ashurst, and at Waverley were unusually low Of the whole 778 children over eight years of age, 479 had not been two years at the schools at which they were present on examination days, and thirty-five were Maoris. With regard to the work of these preparatory classes, in most of the large schools it was very good indeed, while in four large schools the teaching and the training of the little ones was of exceptional merit. We are pleased to be able to state that some of these infant departments are managed by pupil-teachers, or ex-pupil-teachers, who give great promise of becoming very successful infant-mistresses. In the smaller schools, the work naturally was not so far advanced as that in the larger schools, but in many of them the quality was quite as good as could be expected under the circumstances, while the general control and management, and the methods of teaching in vogue, were very good. We note with pleasure that throughout the district greater attention is being paid to singing, class-drill, and physical exercise in these classes, and the result on the whole of the school work is very satisfactory The "phonic system" is almost universally adopted in this district now, and it is having an excellent effect upon the speech of the pupils, there being few indeed who cannot enunciate clearly and distinctly

The New Syllabus and Examination Regulations.—The revised regulations of the Education Department for the examination of schools came into force on the 1st July, 1894, and all the schools except eight taken before that date were examined in accordance with their provisions. The eight schools examined according to the previous syllabus were Waituna, Pemberton, Feilding, Colyton, Foxton, Hiwinui, Momohaki, and Kaponga, and the pupils counted as "excepted" at the examinations of these schools were in the annual returns necessarily classified as "failed."

The chief changes made in the syllabus were, we are glad to say, in the direction of lightening the burden of the teachers' work. The requirements in drawing were considerably curtailed in Standard IV and Standard VI., in Standard IV. geography was lightened, and was made a pass-subject instead of a class-subject, and grammar was moved from the pass-subjects to the class-subjects, the minimum requirements for passes in spelling and dictation were clearly defined.

A very radical change was embodied in Regulation 6, which authorises head teachers to determine the pupils fit to pass in Standard I. and Standard II., and on their examinations standard certificates are issued to pupils provided they have been present at the Inspector's examination. This is the outcome of a resolution passed by the Conference of Inspectors recommending the abolition of the "pass" system in Standard I. and Standard II., but we are certainly of the opinion that it was never contemplated by members of the Conference that teachers should have the power to issue Government certificates to pupils taught and examined by themselves, even when the Inspector disagrees entirely with the passes. It seems to us that the final decision should lie with an outside and independent examiner who may act as a check upon undue leniency, and, upon what we have also found, undue severity In large schools where the work is satisfactory the examination by the teacher effects a considerable saving of an Inspector's time, but in large schools where the work is not satisfactory, and in small schools, there is little or no time saved. As an Inspector has to report upon the teacher's classification he must subject large classes that may be unsatisfactory to a thorough examination, and in small schools he cannot arrive at an estimate of the value of the work without examining the individual pupils. On the whole, considering that last year for the first time the teachers had this duty placed upon them, the scheme may be said to have worked satisfactorily, there being comparatively few cases of passes being granted to pupils who were unfit. Moreover, teachers have frequently preferred that we should examine their classes, and thus relieve them of the responsibility and even odium which, in country districts, may be attached to the failure of pupils. Of course, we have sometimes found, even where the examination by the teacher has been most carefully conducted, that pupils who passed for the teacher failed for us, and *vice versâ*, but such cases are merely incidental to any system of examination, and do not affect the general bearing of the examinations. Teachers should, however, remember that passes are granted and certificates issued in recognition of certain knowledge acquired by the pupils, and in granting passes should not be influenced by extraneous considerations such as age, absence on account of sickness, &c., which, however they may excite sympathy, do not justify the issue of standard certificates. One teacher stated that he passed on account of advanced age a boy whom he knew to be unable to do the work. Such a statement implies that failure necessitates detention in the same class for another year, whereas Regulation 4 distinctly states that the teacher may promote a child at will.

In reading, some teachers display a tendency to accept a lower standard of excellence than is warranted. On the necessity for good and intelligent reading the regulations speak very clearly, and we feel that teachers should carefully guard against being satisfied with mediocrity in this important subject.

Instruction We purpose now to offer a few remarks upon the quality of the work done in the various subjects of instruction, pointing out the chief merits and the chief defects found.

Reading.—The stress now laid upon expressive and intelligent reading is having an excellent effect, and at many schools the subject is treated in a very satisfactory manner Speaking out well, with distinct enunciation, is far more common than it used to be, and this, coupled with the now almost universal practice of getting pupils to answer in sentences in oral work, has been the means of improving the conversation of the pupils when out of school. Many young teachers, especially young female teachers, are showing considerable aptitude in teaching reading. That pupils found great difficulty in reading anything approaching new matter was often made clear to us, especially

at inspection visits. With a view to the attainment of greater readiness and facility in this respect, and to the enlargement of the pupils' vocabulary, we think that at least two reading-books should be mastered during a school year In the lower classes especially it is all important that a wider course of properly graduated reading should be gone through, so that the pupils, when they reach the higher standards, may find no difficulty with any ordinarily simple word. At present it is quite a common thing to find pupils knowing their one book by heart. The higher numbers of the series of reading-books at present in use might be much improved upon, but we forbear recommending others pending the issue of the Education Department's publications. No subject appears to demand in so great a degree as reading that the teacher shall be able to secure the active sustained attention and the hearty co-operation of his pupils. Consequently we occasionally find that some teachers, who are exceedingly earnest in their work but weak in controlling capacity, fail year after year to obtain good reading from their pupils. Such failure we might be inclined to lay at the doors of the children, did we not find so often that a change of teachers brings about in a very short time a complete transformation in the style of the reading.

Dictation and Spelling.—In accordance with the new regulations, the tests given in dictation were shorter than in former years, and in spelling, in Standard III. only were errors in isolated words counted against the pupils. In Standards IV, V., and VI. we gave such words, but merely for our own information. On the whole, the quality of the work varied very much, not only at different schools, but also at different classes in the same school. We should recommend that pupils in Standard III. be always required to write the isolated words in syllables. In Standard I. and Standard II. the spelling generally was very good. Some teachers might remember that, when this work is written on slates, scribbling should not be allowed, for in the lowest classes it is most important that, in any work entailing the formation of letters, such letters should be formed as carefully as in the writing-lesson proper

Writing.—On the whole, writing is generally good, though hardly in so many schools as it used to be, probably because it was, as a rule, from this subject that the extra time required of late years for drawing was taken. In several schools sufficient attention is not paid to the position of the pupils and to the style of holding the pens. We are glad to be able to speak in high terms of the writing, methodical arrangement, and neatness of the examination papers of the district generally, indeed, we were frequently astonished at the accuracy of the ruling off and arrangement of work by very young pupils.

Drawing.—Freehand drawing and scale drawing were generally very good, while in some schools they were very fine indeed. Standard IV plane geometry has shown considerable improvement as regards both knowledge of working and mechanical accuracy and neatness now that the number of problems has been reduced. Sometimes it was necessary to make allowance for poor instruments. In Standard VI. model drawing generally was poor, but all the schools have not yet been supplied with models, and solid geometry was seldom good at examination, though frequently so in the books where the pupils had the instructions before them. Now that only two branches of drawing need be taken in Standard VI. we hope to find a great improvement in model drawing and in solid geometry wherever either is taken.

Arithmetic.—With the exception of a few schools examined during the earlier part of the year, all pupils above Standard II. were examined in arithmetic by cards issued by the Education Department. In Standard I. and Standard II. the tests were given by us, and the work was generally very good, and in most cases was set out in highly creditable style, with neat figuring and arrangement. In Standard III. to Standard VI. the somewhat different style of the cards affected the results to a greater or less extent, particularly in those schools examined immediately after the cards were issued. In Standard V and Standard VI. the full requirements of the syllabus were demanded, whereas hitherto questions on time, rate, principal, and compound proportion in Standard V., and present worth and true discount in Standard VI., had not been set. We were surprised that Standard III. did not do better work, as the cards were of a very easy character, in fact, a very fair proportion of the work was such as is required from Standard II.

Mental arithmetic still remains very unsatisfactory Not only are pupils, as a rule, quite unacquainted with the commonest short methods of working (*e.g.*, one dozen at 9¾d. each), but they are quite puzzled by simple questions such as are constantly occurring in daily life. Questions such as "How many books at 4d. each can I get for 2s. 8d.?" to Standard IV., and "What change should I have out of £2 after spending 13s. 4d.?" to Standard III., would produce a very small percentage of correct answers. In Standards V and VI. the work was even poorer, and we found that many simple operations, such as are in the class text-books described as "oral work," and are introductory to the arithmetical processes, were very poorly done. Easy questions on simple interest and on fractions were marked by a want of knowledge of the principles involved rather than by merely mechanical errors. We strongly advise teachers to make a freer use of mental arithmetic to lead up to the slate work; in fact, all new rules should be preceded by properly graduated mental exercises, which would serve to illustrate and elucidate the principles involved. Teachers should also insist upon the pupils working mentally many of the simple processes which may occur in the mechanical work, and for which the slates are now used. We have frequently noticed pupils, when they wish to reduce such a sum as 57s. to pounds, put down 57, and divide by 20 by cutting off the 0 and the 7, instead of at once obtaining the answer mentally A very good little book on mental arithmetic is published by Longmans and Co., and we recommend teachers to use it as a text-book.

Geography.—A change has again been made in the requirements in geography In Standard IV it has been lightened and made a pass-subject, and in Standard V and Standard VI. slight modifications have been made in the distribution of the work. The syllabus of work previously prescribed for Standard IV was too heavy, if proper attention were paid to New Zealand and Australian geography and to the map of the world, and the transference of physical geography to the higher classes was a very desirable relief.

While political and commercial geography are generally well taught, the physical geography remains unsatisfactory A decided improvement is required in the method of treating this most important part of geography Too frequently we find that pupils have copied into their note-books short passages about various portions of the work, and have committed them to memory, often without understanding them. The result is that, at examination time, the answers throughout a class are strikingly similar, word for word almost, or, if the question differ slightly in form from what the pupils have been accustomed to, they are unable to answer it at all, or else they write something altogether inappropriate to the question. Again, pupils will tell you that there is a difference of four minutes in local time per degree of longitude, but they cannot tell why this is so, nor can they show why it should be a difference of four minutes per degree and not five minutes or eight minutes. Pupils are frequently taught physical geography as though it is something that pertains only to foreign parts, and has little or nothing to do with the spot in which they dwell. Thus they will tell you how the climate of India is affected by the Himalayas, and why Moscow is very hot in summer and very cold in winter, but they cannot even make an attempt at enumerating the influences that determine the climate of the place in which the school is situated. It is a great pity that more attention is not paid to the proper treatment of physical and mathematical geography, as they train the reasoning powers of the pupils more than any other branch of geography, and the principles will remain as part of the mental capital of the pupils long after the mere names and facts of political geography are forgotten.

Grammar.—The new regulations made grammar a class-subject in Standard IV., so that it is now a class-subject in the four standards in which it is taken. Our remarks under this heading in our report for 1893 apply again this year.

In Standard III. the work often showed intelligent methods and fair grasp of the subject. The same remark applies to Standard IV also, but in the case of fewer schools than before the recent change was made. Functions of words were not always stated as fully and as definitely as they might have been; while those of some words, such as the predicative adjective, the joining words "when," "where," &c., were seldom attempted. It is highly important that the statement of the function of each part of speech should contain some distinctive word or phrase used exclusively for that part of speech, as *naming* for the noun, and *stating* for the verb. In Standard V and Standard VI. grammar has shown a great falling off since it was placed in the pass-subject group. Analysis especially showed inferior teaching, and, as a necessary consequence, parsing was bad. In Standard VI., at school after school the pupils were unable to pick out the principal clauses and the subordinate clauses in a complex sentence, and frequently when they could pick out the latter clauses they could not name them. It might be noted that attention to the punctuation of the sentence would have saved many pupils from errors. Now, we cannot be too emphatic upon this that in the teaching of English grammar it is necessary that the pupils should be got as quickly as possible to understand the structure of the sentence and the logical relation of its parts, and so to proceed analytically "If the parts of speech are to be properly taught, the analysis of sentences should come forward at the very beginning."—*Bain.* In the parsing in these classes the verb appears to present great difficulty A large percentage of the pupils are unable to distinguish participles from finite verbs, passive voice from active voice, &c. This, we think, must be the result of purely mechanical teaching. The pupils jump to conclusions from the appearance of the words, and that, too, after only a casual glance at them, in place of forming their judgments after a thorough examination of the functions which the words are found performing. In all oral teaching in grammar "reasons" should invariably be required. Thus, in the sentence, "He was struck," the pupil, when accounting for the *person* of the pronoun, should say, "'He stands instead of the name of the person spoken of, therefore it is in the third person", and when accounting for the *voice* of the verb, "'was struck' states that the subject 'He' received the effect of the action, therefore it is in the passive voice." It is much to be regretted that grammar has so much deteriorated in the higher standards, for it is one of the most truly educative subjects in the primary course of instruction. The late Matthew Arnold said, 'I attach great importance to grammar as leading the children to reflect and reason, as a very simple sort of logic, more effective than arithmetic as a logical training, because it operates with concretes, or words, instead of with abstracts, or figures."

Composition.—More attention is now being given to composition, and teachers are making greater efforts to teach the principles which govern the structure of sentences; and are not resting satisfied with the mere correction of the written exercises. The forms of the letters are, as a rule, correctly made out, and are properly punctuated. In the bodies of the letters we frequently meet with elaborate introductions, which state that the writers hope we are quite well, and that they are going to tell us about certain subjects, but very little space is devoted to the real subject of the composition. About "wolves" (a lesson on which occurs in the reading-books) we may be told little more than that they are very like dogs, and were formerly common in Britain and a story or narrative may be broken off at a point which impels one to look for the phrase "to be continued in our next." What is wanted is a *résumé* of the lesson, much more condensed, of course, than it occurs in the book, but complete in itself, and, as is stated on the cards, we want so many lines about the subject set on the blackboard. Then, if the pupil feels inclined, or has time, he may add whatever he pleases to make it more letter-like, or to make it appear to be a reply to a letter received. We regret that the remark in last year's report has not had the desired effect of getting the pupils to write their essays under headings, for we still find that they "deal at far too great a length with one trivial incident connected with the subject given, and ignore the chief points."

Paraphrasing is still generally poor, pupils seeming unable to grasp the meaning of the passages given, though they are usually taken from well-known poems, or from the reading-books. We find this same inferiority when we question pupils on the subject-matter of their recitation, and no doubt the two results are due to the same cause—*i.e.*, that, while the prose in the books may be carefully prepared, the poetry is almost altogether neglected.

Object-lessons and Science.—In these the quality of the work improves slowly. There seems to be, however, a somewhat general idea that they may be "shirked" and left to the end of the year, and then rushed over merely for examination purposes. This does not by any means mislead an examiner, for he can easily see, from the general style of answering, if the pupils' powers of observation and reason have been properly trained. Teachers are gradually forming in the schools collections of such objects as are required for object-lessons, but, as a general rule, it is only a half-hearted interest that is displayed in bringing together suitable objects for illustration. If teachers encouraged the co-operation of their pupils, every child would be a collector, and would have a personal and direct interest in the lessons. If a lesson on "lead" is to be given, pupils might be asked to bring simple objects made of lead, and these would be kept in the school for future lessons or for use in revision. Agricultural knowledge is becoming more popular as a science subject, and the first and second courses prove very interesting and instructive. The third course is, however, frequently omitted, as being unsuitable for mixed classes.

In the schools as a whole we are sure sound training is being received by the pupils. Though we have pointed out that in certain subjects defective methods are employed, still teachers as a body are anxious to adopt the best methods, and most of them apply them well. Weak disciplinarians are very rare, and good control is generally obtained without visible effort.

It gives us great pleasure to be able to speak in terms of special commendation of the work done by young teachers who have only recently completed their pupil-teacherships. Many of them are working under great disadvantages, having to teach all the standards in remote country schools. Their efforts are very successful, and are much appreciated by those with whom they are brought into contact.

The manners of the pupils throughout the district are very pleasing.

We have, &c.,

W. H. Vereker-Bindon, M.A., Inspector.

W E. Spencer, M.A., B.Sc., Assistant Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON

Sir,— Wellington, 28th February, 1895.

We have the honour to present our report on the work and condition of the primary State schools of the Wellington District for the year 1894.

The number of schools in operation during the year was ninety-four—an increase of four on the year 1893. New schools were opened at Ngaturi, Scarborough, Mangaone Valley, and Kaipororo in the Forty-mile Bush, and at Pencarrow Light, near Wellington. One small aided school at Grassendale, near Tenui, was closed during the year The Wellington city schools at the Te Aro end are now fairly filled, including the Newtown School, lately enlarged, and demand for increased accommodation may shortly be looked for. The Willis Street School much needs internal renovation, and the Mount Cook Boys' School in some of its class-rooms is badly furnished. Also many of the country schools are in need of repairs and exterior or interior painting, although very much renovation is done to some of them every year The total number of children on the books of the several schools at the time of the examinations was 12,643, an increase of only 306 on the previous year's return. We have noticed for many years past that the increases are not constant, but appear to run in cycles.

During the first half of this year the smaller up-country schools were examined as in former years. In the latter half the remaining schools, including all the larger ones, were examined under the revised regulations of the Education Department. As indicated in our last report, many schools had lost ground to make up. From these causes, and those incident to change of programme and varying tests, the number of failures this year in some standard classes, particularly the Third and Sixth, was greater than usual. Without lowering the arithmetical standard, we hope to see the tests present less difficulty of comprehension, and then we think there will be no difficulty in meeting requirements.

The number passed in standards this year was only 6,458, as compared with 6,818 in 1893. Still, of the total number examined, 80 per cent. passed, and this, under the circumstances, we consider a satisfactory result. These remarks do not excuse some schools from an inordinate amount of failure, generally caused by weak teachers. Among the nine schools of Class A two are considerably behind the rest. In Class B there are one or two cases of unsatisfactory work, though very good work was done in most of them. In Class C appears one lamentably weak school, from which the teacher has since been removed. In Class D some of the results are accidentally low, owing to change of teachers, or the district being newly settled. The aided schools were fairly satisfactory, except one, from which the teacher has since been removed. Speaking generally, we are of opinion that the requirements of the State are fairly met, and that in the largest schools, and in the great bulk of the rest, the teachers are doing faithful and intelligent work.

The practical teaching of experimental science continues to be a good feature of the class-work. In some of the largest schools good work of this kind is done in classes as low as Standard II. Oxygen and hydrogen are made to illustrate the most elementary lessons on the properties of gases. Some class-teachers of little energy are apt to neglect the preparation of lessons, or at least do so partially In cases of this kind the head teachers should insist on the experiments being properly prepared, and all material being ready to hand.

In the object-lesson instruction there is still too much of the old-fashioned teaching of mere facts, instead of the intelligent drawing out of the observation of the class by experiments, and,

when in a recent pupil-teacher examination the notes of a lesson were asked for it was lamentable to see how few took advantage of the question to show that they taught on modern lines.

In composition and recitation marked improvement is going on. We have recommended in many schools that composition should begin in Standard II. Wherever this has been done good results have followed, and Standard II. classes take great interest in the work. In the upper classes sentences are not only formed more grammatically correct, but the children are able to express their thoughts in their own natural and simple language, and they have less difficulty in producing the prescribed quantity without resorting to padding. In many instances, too, they think out well connected and intelligent narratives. As more importance is now attached to composition than to formal grammar, we may hope for still further progress in the style and character of the composition.

In cases where the head teachers of an infant school, or in infant departments in large schools, are competent teachers of singing, and possess also aptness for teaching observation lessons suited to the capacity of the classes, then it is found that true kindergarten work is done, and the life of the school is healthy and bright. In the Mount Cook Infant School and in the Thorndon infant department the best kindergarten work is done, and we have great pleasure in especially commending the newly-introduced basket-work, action songs, and varied occupation of the Thorndon infant department. A good infant school is the best ground for a pupil-teacher on probation to learn the first principles of teaching, and such use has been made of our best schools for years past. We should like to see further developments in the Masterton infant department, with a view of making it a training ground for country probationers.

We still find many of the classes provided with only one reading-book, and this is insufficient narrative for a year's work. The book loses its interest, and in the lower classes it is known by heart. Teachers can avoid this in the lower classes by the use of reading sheets, or by daily printing on the blackboard a new passage for class-reading. But more class-books are desirable. A School Committee cannot do better public service than by providing sets of the many excellent geographical, historical, or scientific readers for class use in their schools. A set will last several years, and, if only one set for one class were purchased every year much good would be done. In cases where the parents could afford to do so, the children should possess other sets. We think due attention is paid to the teaching of expressive reading, but want of extended practice leads to hesitancy or higgling.

The teaching of singing has received a new impetus from the opening of classes for the instruction of teachers by Mr R. Parker on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The institution of the choral union of teachers has also proved a success, and a large choral festival, by the assembled school children of Wellington, was held this year in the Opera House. There is a notion in the minds of some that singing from notes is now being taught for the first time. As a matter of fact, whilst we know that improvement in this respect goes on from year to year, the tonic-sol-fa notation, with good class singing, has been taught in most of our schools for many years past, and by some of the headmasters with great success. It is noticeable that the preparation in the several schools of specific songs for the choral festival introduced, for the first time, an element of uniformity in the work done. Another important gain by the undertaking is the marvellous cheapness at which copies of the music are supplied to the pupils.

In accordance with instructions from the Board, contributions of parcels of suitable books have been made to sixty school libraries during the past two years. There are now 12,000 volumes in the school libraries of this district. About 4,000 children make use of these libraries. In many schools suitable cupboards have been erected; and great interest is generally taken in the upkeep of the stock of books.

The drawing instruction continues very satisfactory In the first-grade examination the numbers passed were as follows (showing a small increase on last year's results, with improved work in geometrical and model drawing) Freehand, 711, geometry, 1,233, scale, 613, model, 336.

A class of pupils, sixty-two scholarship-holders from the city schools, holding full certificates, attends the Technical School once a week for instruction in second-grade work.

We are of opinion that as time goes on the need of further technical instruction for the upper classes of large schools will be felt, and that instruction in woodwork or carpentry for boys, and in cookery for girls, will form the coping-stone of our educational curriculum, but this instruction must be given by specialists.

Arrangements have been made whereby the same Government military officers continue to give the physical-drill instruction in the city schools, and exceedingly good work is being done. M. de Mey's instruction of the girls, and additional instruction of the boys in the city schools, and his periodical visits to the country, have been carried out as usual. The whole work is largely supplemented by the teaching staff, and drill, with more or less smartness and precision, is taught throughout the district.

Of all the subjects taught, arithmetic, as at present constituted, makes the largest demands upon the time available for schoolwork. But we think it quite possible to reconstitute our school arithmetic course, with greater gain to the development of the reasoning faculties, by discharging rules of no practical utility, by omitting weights and measures not in actual common colonial use, by teaching simple decimals and fractions in Standard IV., and by applying in Standards V and VI. a knowledge of decimals and fractions to the more ready solving of ordinary problems. The immense gain which could be effected in arithmetical expertness we think can hardly be over-estimated, and we shall hope to see this fully demonstrated as time goes on.

We have, &c.,

ROBERT LEE,
T. R. FLEMING, } Inspectors.

The Chairman, Education Board, Wellington.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	370	..		
Standard VI.	811	789	483	13 5
" V	1,102	1,074	759	12 7
" IV	1,611	1,565	1,124	11 8
" III. ..	1,714	1,657	1,260	10 8
" II. ..	1,645	1,599	1,431	9 7
" I.	1,485	1,454	1,401	8 5
Preparatory	3,905			
Totals	12,643	8,138	6,458	11 0*

* Mean of average age.

HAWKE'S BAY

SIR,— Education Office, Napier, 10th January, 1895.

I have the honour to submit to you my annual report for the year ending the 31st December, 1894.

All the work of school inspection and examination was completed by the end of November, and December was spent in the examination of candidates for the Board's scholarships and of the pupils belonging to the upper division of the Gisborne District High School.

Three new schools were opened during the year—namely, Weber, Tamumu, and Maharahara East—and the school at Port Awanui was closed. Fifty-eight schools are now in active operation. In most of the districts the supply of school places is fairly sufficient for the pupils attending, and, although settlement is taking place at a somewhat rapid rate in certain portions of the Waipawa, Hawke's Bay, and Cook Counties, I do not anticipate many new claims upon the Board for schools during the coming year In the larger towns, however, the full school supply is reached, and should there be any increase in the numbers attending further accommodation will be wanted.

The school buildings generally are in good repair, and, with few exceptions, the offices, grounds, and fences give evidence of careful attention and supervision. The Committees on the whole take an intelligent interest in the management and control of the schools, and many improvements are carried out under their supervision in addition to those authorised by the Board. The shelter-sheds which have been lately provided in a number of districts are much appreciated by the children, and it will be well when every school in the district is supplied with this very necessary requirement.

At the date of the examinations 6,735 pupils were returned as belonging to the schools. This represents an increase in the year's attendance of 352 pupils. Of the fifty-eight schools, there are five each with an average attendance of more than 300 pupils, eight others with an attendance varying from 100 to 300 pupils, whilst the remaining forty-five schools contain about the same number of children as are attending the combined schools of Napier, Gisborne, and Hastings. The average regularity of pupils at school is represented by 80·3 per cent. of the roll for the year. This is not a satisfactory result. Although the Act dealing with compulsory attendance is supposed to be enforced, there is evidently a great deal of laxity somewhere. I have watched with some interest the likely cause of irregular attendance among children, and I am convinced that no enforcement of attendance by law will be effective unless teachers interest themselves in the matter During the past two years I have been particularly struck with the improved attendance at the Napier Main School, and that improvement has taken place solely through the emulation which the headmaster and his staff have brought to bear on the work of the school. The absence of every pupil in each class is noted morning and afternoon, an inquiry is made as to the cause, and at the close of the week the percentages of attendance for each class are compared. The results are placed on a board prepared for the purpose, and the class which has made the best attendance is recognised as the "honours class" for the week. The attendance results at Napier show a great improvement compared with what was common a few years ago, and some of the upper classes reach as high as 98 per cent. of the roll-number As showing the wide differences existing in the regularity of children at the different schools, I have compared the attendance at five schools for the December quarter over a period of five years. These schools are Napier, Gisborne, Woodville, Taradale, and Wairoa. At Napier the regularity for the whole period is represented by 80·9 per cent. of the roll-number; at Gisborne the regularity is 91·3 per cent., at Woodville, 76 per cent., at Taradale, 68·5 per cent., and at Wairoa, 70·5 per cent. These results show a sad disregard to school attendance in the case of schools like Taradale and Wairoa, and even Woodville is not without blame. Napier is better, but it is hardly to the credit of parents in the principal town of the district to find itself beaten by Gisborne by more than 10 per cent. in the regularity of the school children, and this over a period of five years.

But this question of regularity bears directly on the question of efficiency Suppose, for example, that the teachers in each of the above-named schools are equally qualified, what results are to be expected from them on the assumption that the schools have been opened 400 times during the year? The Gisborne pupils will have made on the average 365·2 attendances, Napier 323·6, Woodville 304, Taradale 274, and Wairoa 282. Everybody knows what these figures mean in the

case of men working 365 days and others 274 days under similar conditions, but the same results follow in the school workshop, for children in 274 days cannot do the work which it takes other children 365 days to do under similar working conditions. And the comparative efficiency of the schools named shows how much depends, in successful school-keeping, upon regularity of attendance in combination with methodical instruction. If the new Act dealing with school attendance is strictly enforced throughout the district the average efficiency of the schools will be raised, and I look forward with some hope to this being done during the coming year

Regulation 5 of the standards of instruction requires an Inspector to include in his annual report information with respect to the number of children belonging to the preparatory or non-standard classes who are more than eight years old. The number of such children shows little or no diminution compared with previous years. With a roll-number of 6,735 pupils it is hardly creditable to find 550 of them over eight years of age in the preparatory classes. At Ormond and Ormondville the non-standard classes contain 18·8 and 17·6 per cent. respectively of children over eight years of age. At Norsewood the numbers reach 16·1 per cent., and at Napier and Kaikora the proportion is over 11 per cent. Gisborne, with 662 pupils, has 6·1 per cent. over eight years in the preparatory classes, whilst Port Ahuriri, with 342 pupils, has only 3·5 per cent. The wide differences in adjoining districts, like Napier and Port Ahuriri, are difficult to harmonize. It may be that the children at the latter school begin to attend much younger than they do at the former but, if so, it affords a good example of the advantages of early infant training in those cases where the children are placed under favourable conditions for instruction and training. I am by no means in favour of the adoption of an age clause in the passing of children through the standards, but it seems that if more encouragement were given for the attendance of young children at school, a full year might be gained in getting through the present standard requirements.

I have already stated that the school returns for the year show an increase of 352 names compared with the returns for the previous year The following table gives in summary form the results of the examination in the Board schools only For purposes of comparison the results are added for the corresponding period of 1893:—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Examined	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	52					
Standard VI.	218	5	213	73	140	14 0
" V	430	9	421	122	299	13 2
" IV	687	34	653	155	498	12 4
" III.	934	42	892	185	707	11 1
" II.	933	56	877	125	752	10 0
" I.	951	46	905	137	768	9 0
Preparatory	2,530					
Totals	6,735	192	3,961	797	3,164	11 7
Totals for 1893	6,383	301	3,894	901	2,697	11 8

In addition to the schools represented in these returns, I examined the Meanee and Waipawa Catholic schools, containing eighty-three and seventy-seven pupils respectively Separate reports have been made on them, as in the case of the Board schools. The increase in the number of presentations in standards is only ten more than it was in the previous year. The passes show a large increase for the year, but it will be remembered the passes in 1893 were unusually low, owing to the epidemic of measles, followed by whooping-cough, that passed over the whole of the district. With those in the class above Standard VI. the passes represent 47·7 per cent. of the total number belonging to the schools, whilst the standard pupils, excluding all those who failed or were absent in the First Standard, are represented by 4,022 pupils, which is very nearly 60 per cent. of the number attending school.

These results may be set down as satisfactory, if we assume that the new conditions as to examination are as difficult as they were under the old regulations. From an educational point of view the past year was an important one. For the first time since the passing of the Education Act in 1877 a Conference of School Inspectors met in Wellington early in February, on the invitation of the Minister of Education, at which, with one exception, every Inspector in the colony was present. The Inspector-General presided at that Conference. The proceedings were subsequently published and, as the outcome of the recommendations made to the Minister of Education, a new code of standard regulations was issued. These contain changes of some importance in their bearing upon the examination and general efficiency of the schools. No. 6 of the regulations confers upon head teachers the duty of examining Standards I and II., to ascertain what pupils are fit to pass those standards respectively As the new regulations did not come into force until July, only thirty-five schools have been examined under them, the remaining twenty-three schools having been examined under the old regulations in the first half of the school year The "pass" results under the new system are necessarily incomplete, but they enable me, nevertheless, to estimate in some measure the effects which this concession to teachers is likely to have upon the future efficiency of the schools. In the twenty-three schools examined during the first half of the year there were 381 children in the two lowest standards. One hundred and fourteen of them, or 30 per

cent., failed to reach the requirements. In the thirty-five schools where Standards I. and II. were examined by the teachers there were 1,401 pupils in the two lowest classes, and the failures were 148, or 10·5 per cent. of the whole, and of these more than half came from the Napier School alone. Here "freedom of classification" by teachers is clearly in favour of sending forward the children at a more rapid rate and on a lower standard test than I have hitherto been willing to recognise. If, however, thoroughness is to be the criterion of work, I am satisfied that the influx of unprepared children into the higher standards will have a prejudicial effect upon the standards in years to come, and I caution the teachers as to the risks they run with this power of free classification in their hands.

A second important change in the standard examination has been the introduction of arithmetical tests issued by the central department to the Inspectors to be used in the examination of all pupils above Standard II. This innovation is a good one. It certainly saves a large amount of time in the preparation of questions, and I am satisfied also that it will have a good effect upon the tone of the schools and the more thorough preparation of the pupils. Under the new plan I have found several schools unexpectedly break down in arithmetic, especially in Standards V and VI., but on the whole the results have given proof that the subject receives much careful attention. As so often pointed out, those schools where mental arithmetic is strong find little difficulty in working the ordinary pass tests, and I regret that mental arithmetic does not form a part of the pass work in this important subject. Few subjects, it seems to me, provide a better intellectual training, and its practical application to the needs of daily life is of too much value to be neglected among a people given largely to business pursuits.

The extra time which the new regulations have made available to Inspectors has been much appreciated by me personally, but I am doubtful whether education will benefit by the change. No one conversant with the routine of examination as at present carried on but must have felt that the objects to be gained by individual examination could be reached just as rapidly and effectively by the adoption of simpler and more rational methods. The non-examination of Standards I. and II. in pass-subjects has diminished my actual pass-work by one-fifth, but the examinations are still the same for the children, and increased duties have actually been imposed upon head teachers. Over-examination has done, and still does, much harm to both teachers and children. True educative processes have had to give way in the schools to the necessities of examinations, and mind training and mind growth are neglected for the more showy but less effective methods now so common in the schools. Teachers rather than examiners are wanted, and, whilst I do not doubt the capacity of teachers to exercise fair judgment in the examination of their pupils, it is a cause for regret that the services of all the best teachers should be forcibly withdrawn from their more important school duties simply to supply tabulations such as an ordinary inspection could furnish in a few minutes.

Respecting the character of the work done in the schools, my separate reports will have already informed you. In very few instances is there evidence of neglect or of careless preparation on the part of teachers. I find, however, a great tendency among them to run in grooves, and the instruction often becomes dry and unattractive. During inspection visits, when methods are studied and inquiry is made as to the character and kind of instruction and of its bearing upon the condition of the school, I am often led to the opinion that the junior teachers are more methodical in the preparation of their work than are the seniors. The "standard lesson-books" which are kept by the junior teachers for my inspection may account for this, but an instruction should hardly be necessary to show senior teachers that similar books should be kept by them if they would become educators, as well as teachers, of the young. Reading is not taught with the intelligence one could wish where so much in life's pleasures depends upon the power of grasping what is to be found in books and in the public Press. I have pointed out again and again that intelligent reading must begin in the infant school, and for this reason the best and most capable teachers are wanted there to make the work sure in anticipation of the standard course. Many errors are still common—errors in emphasis, in modulation, and in the correct sounding of words—and most of these are traceable to imperfect teaching in the junior classes. Young and inexperienced teachers are incapable of conducting any of the higher aspects of training in this subject, and the trained staff in the larger schools must take this duty upon themselves if reading is to occupy its proper place in school work. Writing continues to be fairly taught in many schools, but it is a subject that receives less direct attention from teachers than any other pass-subject. This is to be regretted, for much of the stiff handwriting so common among school-children is the direct result of bad methods and imperfect supervision. Freedom and legibility are the two essentials in good handwriting, and pupils in the two highest standards should be trained in their school work with these ends in view On the whole, drawing is making satisfactory progress. The regulation permitting the exemption of girls in geometrical drawing has been claimed by most teachers. Personally I am sorry for this, but the teachers say the boys take geometrical drawing whilst the girls are sewing, and the latter is looked upon as an equivalent for the girls. Geography continues to be well taught, and there is no subject of the syllabus that gives me more satisfaction than this one. Composition is prepared with growing success, but I am hardly satisfied that the best methods are adopted in the higher classes. I have recommended for Standards V and VI. that a library-book or other be read either weekly or fortnightly by the pupils, and that a paraphrase or summary be made in an exercise-book kept for the purpose. I have seen this plan adopted with excellent results, and I shall be glad to see it followed in all schools where there are any pupils in Standards V and VI.

The class-subjects include grammar, history, mental arithmetic, elementary science, and object-lessons. Grammar is not taught as it used to be when a pass-subject, but the improvement in composition is ample compensation. Recitation is taken by all schools except Clive, and in most of them the results are good. Drill is taught in twenty schools only This does not include the schools that take the purposeless exercises sometimes classed as drill, but military drill as applied to

the training of children. Waipawa and Gisborne stand pre-eminent in this respect, and at Hastings, Waipukurau, Napier, Woodville, Port Ahuriri, Kaikora, Patutahi, Te Arai, and Ormond good progress is being made in the same direction. Drill and calisthenics should be taught in every school, and I think the Board might require all teachers to have a knowledge of these subjects. As aids to school discipline they are of great value, and they ought not to be overlooked even in the small schools. Singing by the tonic sol-fa method is making fair headway and in a number of places the children acquit themselves in an excellent manner In thirty-one schools either a piano or harmonium is provided, and solo singing is practised by many of the better-trained children. The musical training which the children receive at Hastings and Waipawa is excellent, but in all the larger and in some of the smaller schools the music is taught with very fair success. The sewing continues as usual to be examined by three committees of ladies in the month of November in each year, and their separate reports show that a high standard of excellence is maintained in this important subject of instruction.

In twenty schools a library is maintained for the benefit of the pupils, and the number is likely to increase, as teachers are finding out the value of a good collection of books as aids to the cultivation of a literary taste among the children. To add to the usefulness of school libraries it would be well were arrangements made for the periodical exchange of books among the schools free of cost. Possibly if the attention of the Education Department were called to this matter arrangements might be made for carrying it out at regular intervals.

I notice there is a growing desire among Committees to widen the scope of their work. During my last visit to the Poverty Bay District the Gisborne Committee consulted me on the question of establishing technical classes for the benefit of the senior pupils. The Committee propose to start classes for the instruction of boys in type-writing and woodwork, and for girls in practical dressmaking and elementary cooking. No difficulty is anticipated in providing the necessary funds to maintain these classes during the coming year Judging by what this Committee have been able to do in the past, there is every promise that their efforts to foster technical instruction among the pupils will be successful. At Woodville, evening classes have been successfully established for the benefit of youths and young men and a little while ago I had the pleasure of attending the last meeting of the session, in Napier, where evening classes have been carried on by a number of ladies. Many years ago I was closely connected with some of the largest night-schools in England, and the experience and insight gained during a period of seven years convinced me that what are now known as continuation schools are necessary to bring out the full benefits of the present system of school training. The period between fourteen and eighteen years in the life of a youth is too important to neglect, and something ought certainly to be done to help on the voluntary efforts of those who are doing such effective work among youths in the places named.

The discipline in most of the schools continues satisfactory, and the same may be remarked as to the moral tone. If sometimes the results are not all such as could be desired, the fault does not rest with the teachers. In my frequent visits to the schools there is ample opportunity of observing the kind of work that is being accomplished. The teachers are earnest, and there are to be found in their ranks men who look upon a pass or a failure as of secondary importance in comparison with the training of their pupils. A high ideal is in the minds of many, and, though creeds and formularies are strictly excluded from the schools, there is a religion practised which is leading the children to the observance of deeds of kindness, sympathy, and a high regard for duty both at home and at school. Strong efforts are made to develop character, and though failures are not uncommon there is evidence of improvement over the entire district.

The tabulations appended hereto [not printed] contain a summary of the results for each school examined, and of its general condition, under the heading "Manners and tone."

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier H. Hill, Inspector.

MARLBOROUGH.

Sir,— Blenheim, 7th January, 1895.

I have the honour to present my fourth annual report on the condition of the public schools in this district, and on the results of the recent examinations.

The number of schools under the control of your Board has increased from thirty-six at the end of 1890 to fifty-six at the end of 1894. Forty-five of these were examined this year, three were temporarily closed at the time fixed for the examination, five had been so recently started that I did not think it necessary to examine them two schools have not yet been examined on account of their remote situation, but will be visited for that purpose early this year, and one, Nydia Bay, did not present its scholars on the day of examination at the place appointed, although there was no apparent cause for their absence. This case demands a satisfactory explanation. There were 2,079 children on the rolls of the schools at the dates of their examination this year—an increase of 101 since my last report. The number absent from the examination was fifty-one, or less by sixty-seven than were absent last year The number of scholars who passed their respective standards has increased from 1,055 to 1,166, an improvement as compared with the number examined of about 3 per cent. The children in the preparatory classes numbered 634, which is about the same as last year when compared with the roll-number, and is about 30 per cent. The class above Standard VI. has increased from twenty-eight to forty-two. In a small and isolated district such as this, without any means of higher education, it is a great advantage to the few scholars who can be spared by their parents to attend school after passing Standard VI. to have another year's work in that standard. In small schools their presence is a distinct benefit to those scholars working with them, and might be of considerable service to the

teachers, if they were required to give a little assistance with the lower classes as a condition of their continuance in the schools.

The number of children more than eight years of age not presented in standards this year is 107. The reasons assigned for withholding them were Late entrance, 39, dull intellect, 29, irregularity of attendance, 22 ill-health, 2 at newly-started schools, 6, no explanation, 8 self-will, 1. If the truth were known, possibly the last-named explanation might be given to some of the cases set down under the first three.

In referring to the increase in the number of schools, it is perhaps advisable to remind the Board that nearly all the schools added to the list during the last four years are small aided schools, which seem to increase at the rate of five or six per annum There is every reason to expect that this increase will be maintained for some years to come if the Board continues its present scale of payments to aided schools. Seeing, however, that they are maintained at a considerable loss to the Board, it is evident that their extension cannot be continued indefinitely (unless special provision be made for their support) without ultimate injury to the larger schools. When the physical features of the northern portion of the district are considered there can be no doubt as to the necessity for their existence, and a perusal of the tables will show that some of these little schools are in no respect behind, while a few of them are considerably in advance of many of the country schools in the more settled districts. Nearly all of them are doing useful work, and on the whole they are certainly deserving of the support they receive. In one respect, however the household schools in the Sounds differ from the Board schools as regards the conditions under which they are conducted, and that is in their almost entire immunity from visits of inspection," or, as they are sometimes called, "surprise" visits. That this is a distinct disadvantage no one at all conversant with school matters will venture to dispute nor is there anything necessarily derogatory to the character or the reputation of any of the teachers in thus pointing out the necessity for some kind of inspection. The visits of an Inspector are always welcome to an efficient and conscientious teacher, and even to those less efficient but equally conscientious ones who are anxious to have their defects pointed out and their merits recognised. The only cases where these visits would be unwelcome are those (if such there be) where the exigencies of a struggling settler's life may tempt to the neglect of the school by too frequently employing the time of the children about the work on the land. I have no official knowledge of any such irregularities, and the quality of the work done at the annual examinations convinces me that at the majority of them little or no time can have been lost during the year If laxity of management exists at all, it can be only in a very few cases. Vague rumours have been heard as to the loose manner in which some remote schools are conducted, and, although unworthy of serious consideration, such rumours are sufficient to make it more than usually desirable that inspection visits should be as certain there as in the more settled districts. As you are aware, the children attending these schools are required to assemble at various centres on a certain day for examination purposes. Three or four schools are generally examined together at each centre, and no time is available for anything approaching to inspection. All who are familiar with travelling in the Sounds are aware how important it is to take advantage of fair weather as, owing to the violent and capricious nature of the winds in that locality, a day's delay may result in a week's detention, which would put those schools next to be examined to very great inconvenience, or might even necessitate the total abandonment of the examination for that year. These considerations prevent any attempt at combining the inspection with the visit for examination. The most that can be done is to examine the registers, and endeavour to ascertain if they have been correctly kept. Much more than this is, however, necessary, and the time has arrived when the increasing number of these schools demands more of the Inspector's attention than they have hitherto received. I shall therefore submit for your approval a proposal by which this may be accomplished without, I believe, any very serious expense to the Board.

This year is marked by an important change in the authorised method of reporting the results of the examination, and the change is one which I confidently hope is a step, if only a small one, in the direction of the total abolition of the individual pass system. In the future the expression "percentage of passes" will be officially unknown, and only the number examined and passed will be recorded. Of course it will still be possible for those teachers and Committees that have been in the habit of blazoning abroad the real or imaginary success of their schools to calculate the tabooed percentage for themselves, but to have it shut out from the official reports is of itself a distinct gain. In one portion of this report—viz., that referring to class and additional subjects—I have continued the use of a percentage in a modified form, as by its means varying degrees of merit in those subjects are more accurately expressed than they could be in any very short form of words. I have retained the scale of marks I have all along used for the class-subjects, by which 100= excellent, 80, very good 60, good 40, fair; and 20, poor The marks awarded to each school are based on the average performances of all the classes for which the particular subject is prescribed. Thus under the head of "comprehension" all the six standards are liable to examination, and to illustrate the mode of arriving at the final award for this subject we will take the case of a certain school having six standards represented. The marks for comprehension were thus distributed Standard I., 40, Standard II., 40 Standard III., 29 Standard IV., 40, Standard V., 60 Standard VI., 60 total, 260, which, divided by 6, gives the average 43 as the final award for this subject. At another school the marks awarded to grammar in the four higher standards were as follows 37 in Standard III., 67 in Standard IV, 26 in Standard V., and 0 in Standard VI.; these added together and divided by 4 give the average 32½, the bad work in the Sixth and Fifth thus reducing the good and fair results in the Fourth and Third Standards. This plan has been followed by me for many years, and meets the requirements of the regulations, which provide that "the Inspector shall consider whether the subject is attended to in all the classes for which it is prescribed."

Another very important alteration has been made since my last report in the regulations respecting the examinations of schools—namely, the examination of the two lower standards by the teacher This is an immense relief to the Inspectors, especially in large schools, and there is little or no danger that the examination will be less stringent and thorough when conducted by the head teachers. They know too well the trouble caused in the higher standards by the admission of imperfectly prepared scholars from below and are not likely to add to their difficulties by laxity of examination in Standards I. and II. Several head teachers submitted to me the questions and drawing copies used by them in the lower standards, and I found in all these cases that the tests employed were quite as severe as those hitherto set by myself. This is another and an important advance towards the goal of freedom of classification, and the abolition of the "individual pass." While a national system of primary education is in the earlier stages of its development it is perhaps necessary that stringent, not to say "cast-iron," regulations and limitations should be laid down to secure to the State a certain clearly defined and easily recognisable amount of annual progress in return for the liberal provision made for its support, but, after years of experience have satisfied the country as to the value of public instruction, and the system has taken hold of the good-will of the people generally the time has arrived when the original stringency of the pass system may well be relaxed, the cause of true education promoted, and the earnest, conscientious, and capable teacher relieved from the cramping influence exercised by the inflexible demands of the annual standard examinations. The author of a treatise on education, writing some years ago on the English system, says, "It seems the best plan to disregard the standards altogether, and to teach the children in properly graduated classes, allowing them to fall into the standards according to the official regulations when the annual examination is held" and a few years later he writes, "Further experience and observation have strengthened the conviction already expressed, that if the best interests of the children are considered the standards should be disregarded. It is to be feared that under the 'revised code schools are too often treated as commercial ventures, and when this is the case the work of the teacher becomes more and more mechanical, and a false test of efficiency is adopted, the percentage of passes being accepted as sufficient proof that the school is doing its proper work." The regulations of June, 1894, evidently recognise the principles advocated by the author of the foregoing quotation, as the fullest liberty is given to the teacher in clause 4 as regards the classification of his scholars "for the purposes of instruction." I am much surprised that this liberty has not been made use of, more especially by the sole teachers of country schools, but, as soon as the teachers are fully convinced that their work will no longer be judged chiefly by the "percentage of passes, no doubt it will be more generally exercised.

I do not think it necessary in my reports to refer every year to the treatment of all the subjects of the Government syllabus I shall therefore confine my remarks to such of them as seem to call for special notice.

The removal of grammar from the "pass" to the "class" group has resulted in a very decided falling off in the quality of the work done at the examination. The only schools having the upper standards represented that gave above "fair" marks for grammar were Skiddaw, 72, Robin Hood Bay, 60, Okaramio, 57 Havelock Suburban, 50, Havelock and Taradale (Sounds) 45, Port Underwood and Spring Creek, 41. These figures, as before explained, show the average performance of the four upper standards and, though in some of these schools all four standards were not represented, yet in all of them there were scholars in Standard V, Standard VI., or in both. It stands to reason that an able teacher with only four or five children under his care has a great advantage over the teacher of a large school in many ways, especially in subjects that repay individual attention but the difference between the results quoted above and those obtained at larger schools is greater than can be thus accounted for In Standard III.—the earliest standard for which grammar is prescribed—the ability to distinguish readily the four principal classes of words, to pick them out of a paragraph of the reading-book, and to arrange them in separate groups, demands a greater and more continuous mental effort than any question in arithmetic that it would be fair to set to the same standard. In very few cases was this more than fairly done, and the work of the higher standards in the same subjects was even less satisfactory

Although not by any means indispensable to the correct writing and speaking of English, the study of grammar is regarded by all recognised authorities as of the highest educational value, and, as a mental discipline, superior even to arithmetic, and its exclusion from the pass-subjects I cannot but regard as a mistake. It is supposed that the removal of a subject from the "pass" to the "class' group should make little or no difference in its treatment, but my experience does not support this theory, and as long as the individual pass system survives the class-subjects will continue to be regarded by some teachers and by all scholars as matters of minor importance.

Geography and arithmetic are again the weakest of the pass-subjects. In the upper standards the haziest notions prevail on the subjects of the seasons, and a hopeless confusion as regards such matters as latitude, longitude, rotation, revolution, parallels, and meridians. This being the case, it is much to be regretted that the geographical readers which the Board has provided should remain on the office shelves instead of being placed in the hands of the scholars. This is probably due chiefly to the parsimony or false economy of some parents who begrudge a few shillings for their children's education, though if a circus or theatrical show of any kind comes round the cost of a year's supply of school-books is at once forthcoming to administer to their amusement Doubtless there are many, especially in the country districts, who are really unable to find the needful amount to purchase books, and some means should be adopted to supply these gratuitously therefore I beg to recommend that the geographical readers above referred to be distributed amongst the country schools, to be used as additional reading-books, and to be kept in the school as part of its equipment.

The arithmetic test-cards for Standards III., IV., V., and VI. were prepared this year by the department, and the same cards (or some of them) were used all over the colony. This is the first

practical attempt to set up the fetish uniformity in matters educational, and it will be interesting to know how far the attempt has answered the expectation of its promoters. From some districts complaints have been heard as to the alleged difficulty of the questions set, but I am not aware of any dissatisfaction here. No examiner can prepare even a dozen test-cards on any subject that shall be absolutely equal as regards difficulty and I believe that the arithmetic questions supplied by the department are as nearly so as possible.

As the two lower standards were examined this year by the teachers I have no means of comparing accurately the results in arithmetic with those obtained last year The percentage of passes in arithmetic in the four higher standards this year is 52, last year for all standards it was 68, and as the two lower standards are about equal in numbers to the four upper, and the failures in the lower are very few as a rule compared with the upper, I consider that the arithmetic this year shows somewhat better results than it did last year, and that the tests supplied were no more difficult than those hitherto used in this district. It would, however, be as well to avoid putting questions to Standards III. and IV requiring more than one answer The average child, after working (*a* frequently loses sight altogether of (*b*) and (*c*) To scholars in the Fifth and Sixth, however, such questions should present no difficulty

Elementary science and object-lessons are attended to as well as is possible without any means of experimental illustration in the former and very few real "objects for the latter A few teachers occasionally contrive some more or less rough apparatus to illustrate their lessons, and some of the schools are supplied with object-lesson cards, and pictures of various birds and beasts, and upon these descriptive lessons are given but much more than this is needed before these lessons can be productive of the important educational effect for which they are designed. Much useful knowledge may thus be conveyed to the children, but little is done in the direction of cultivating their powers of observation.

Vocal music is not generally taught in the district. Very few schools attempt it, and in those that do the result is not what might be expected after some years of work. The singing of the junior division of the Blenheim School was relatively the best—*i.e.*, taking the youth of the singers into account. Very satisfactory progress in this has been made during the past year at Grovetown, which school has had the benefit of Mr Cheek's tuition for some time past. At Picton, Marlboroughtown, Okaramio, Marshlands, and Onamalutu singing was presented with fair results.

Infant Classes.—The proper employment of the preparatory classes, particularly in country schools with one teacher, is a matter which demands more attention than it sometimes receives. The time must seem awfully long to these little creatures at such schools when probably a large part of each school meeting is spent in listless inactivity It would be far better to allow the little ones to run outside (in fair weather) as soon as they have finished the work set for them, and when not otherwise occupied, than to be left to sit still half asleep, or to fidget about to the disturbance of the other scholars and the vexation of the teacher I strongly recommend that some of the simpler kindergarten gifts and occupations should be provided for the infants at all the Board schools in the country having but one teacher.

At the chief school in the district the outcome of the examination, whilst by no means bad, yet shows how much it has suffered through the long-continued illness and subsequent decease of the late head teacher Mr Lucas was a rare example of a man who, whilst an admirable teacher and a good disciplinarian, achieved more by his personal influence and through the respect, I might say the affection, with which he was regarded by his scholars, than even by his undoubted ability as an educationist. Any one taking the place of such a teacher would at first have a somewhat difficult task before him. The sympathies of the scholars would not readily be evoked in favour of a stranger with (to them) strange methods and, until he and his pupils came to understand one another, their relation to each other might for a time be somewhat wanting in cordiality It would be premature to express an opinion as to the extent to which the traditional success of the Blenheim School will be maintained under the present head teacher, but, from what I have already observed since he took charge, I am led to hope that its reputation will not suffer under his management.

Conclusion.—The general condition of the schools in this district may be regarded as on the whole very satisfactory This does not imply that there is nothing that it would be desirable to alter or amend, but that there has been throughout the district a constant effort to increase the real efficiency of the teaching, and that in nearly all cases this effort has been attended with a reasonable amount of success. The few larger schools have grappled with the whole of the Government syllabus with results quite as good as we have any right to expect, while at some of the smaller ones—including a few of the household schools—I have been surprised at the excellence of the work done under circumstances not always the most favourable. One specially gratifying feature of our little educational district seems to me to be discernible in the excellent work done by the young teachers who of late years have been intrusted with the charge of schools in different parts of the country, and who have received all their education and training as pupil-teachers or scholars at one or other of our larger schools. There are now some half dozen such teachers at work as sole teachers of country schools, and they are amply justifying their appointments by the earnest, painstaking, conscientious, and successful manner in which they are performing their arduous duties. Some of the head teachers who trained and educated these young persons are still at work amongst us, and no doubt through their efforts there will be no difficulty in keeping the supply of young teachers fully equal to the demand. But here comes the difficulty We are "turning out" (in two senses) two or three pupil-teachers every year, and the chances are much against their being able to find employment in this district. The small aided schools may absorb a few, but they are generally so remotely situated and offer such poor remuneration that they are rarely acceptable to pupil-teachers who have been receiving £40 a year and living at their own homes.

The time is fast approaching when the whole subject of pupil-teachers will have to be reconsidered, and, unless their examination and classification are shortly undertaken by the department, so as to give them a colonial instead of a merely local status, it will become a question whether it would not be better in small districts like this to abandon the pupil-teacher system altogether, and thus avoid the responsibility of overcrowding a profession of which the field of employment is practically limited by the boundaries of the particular district in which the lot of the pupil-teacher may have been cast. In view, however, of the success which has attended the work of training teachers in this district, as shown by the fact just now referred to, it is to be hoped that such a step will be rendered unnecessary, and that the pupil-teacher will ere long be placed on the same footing as other teachers as regards their examination and classification, in which case I believe that those trained here will be able to give a good account of themselves when matched with their fellow-teachers of the same standing in other parts of the colony

While reporting upon the condition of primary education in a district, it may reasonably be expected that something should be said with regard not merely to the efficiency of the schools as centres of instruction and intellectual improvement, but also as regards their influence upon the character and conduct of the scholars and ultimately upon the moral as well as the material welfare of the "rising generation." Any opinion formed by one who visits a district only two or three times during the year may at first sight be supposed to be of little or no value, and perhaps altogether unworthy of being recorded in a public report but an Inspector enjoys opportunities of observation possessed by few others, and which, if taken advantage of, may give him an impression as to the moral tone of the children which may be safely relied on for forming a tolerably correct estimate of the teacher's influence for good in the important matters lying outside the school curriculum, and which are of far more real value and benefit to the future welfare and happiness of the community than the whole of the subjects of the most carefully devised syllabus.

The condition of the school buildings, grounds, and offices, and of the children's own books, their behaviour in the playground, on their way to and from school, at places of public entertainment, and though last not least, their demeanour during the progress of an examination, even the appearance presented by their papers, all afford minute but appreciable traces of the influence that is working for good or for evil amongst them. I believe, as a rule, our teachers are fully awake to their responsibilities in this direction, and that not a few of them are doing work, not distinctly specified in the printed regulations, of a quality and value which cannot now be accurately gauged, but which will be known and acknowledged in the future, at any rate by those now under their tutelage.

If the moral influence of the teacher is not always what it might be, the cause may often be sought for and found in the attitude towards him by the parents and others in his neighbourhood. How often is his character discussed, his methods and arrangement unfavourably criticized, or his harmless little foibles ridiculed by parents in the presence and hearing of his pupils. I have even known of parents instructing their children to disobey some order of the teacher which did not happen to meet with their approval. Notwithstanding all the grand writing and eloquent speaking upon the nobility and dignity of the teacher's office, how little real appreciation of its importance is experienced by many an earnest member of the profession. In large towns and wealthy neighbourhoods he is frequently altogether ignored by those who are supposed to be above him in social position, and in the poorer villages he is as often regarded with a petty jealousy because he appears to be a little better off" than his neighbours. There is, of course, another side of the shield, and instances are not wanting where the teacher, by his own conduct, has forfeited all right to the respect and gratitude of the community, even while performing his routine school duties with regularity and success. Such cases are happily becoming fewer year by year, and probably will ere long be entirely unknown; but in the meantime they undoubtedly have exercised an unfavourable influence upon the estimation in which the primary teachers of the country are held by the general public.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Marlborough. JOHN SMITH, Inspector

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	42			
Standard VI.	82	79	58	14 5
" V	163	158	126	13 7
" IV ..	247	231	195	12 9
" III.	288	280	231	11 6
" II.	334	324	297	10 3
" I.	289	280	259	9 1
Preparatory	634			
Totals	2,079	1,352	1,166	11 11*

* Mean of average age.

NELSON

SIR,—

We have the honour to lay before you our annual report on the Nelson public schools.

A hundred and seven schools were at work at the close of the year, all of which, except two that were recently established, have been examined. The establishment of two others has been sanctioned by the Board, but they have not yet been opened. To ninety schools separate visits of inspection have been made, the exceptions mainly consisting of distant household schools or of those which were established during the latter half of the year Of the total number, seventy-five are termed district schools, twenty-five aided, and seven household. Of the district schools, six are infant schools in large centres of population, and no less than twelve resemble the aided schools in having less than twenty in average attendance, and in receiving payment on the same scale. During the year the names of two—Elmslie Bay and French Pass—which are now included in the Marlborough District, have been removed from our list the two Charleston schools have been amalgamated and the following new ones have been opened Tophouse, Anatoki, Waitahu, Little Wanganui, Kongahau, Ngatimoti Side, Summerlea, Glenroy, and Maruia.

There were 6,031 names on the rolls of the schools on examination-day, 5,562 children being present. The total number on the rolls at the end of December quarter was 5,975. In all particulars these numbers are higher than those of any previous year, thus indicating a slow but steady growth. Four hundred and sixty-nine is an unnecessarily large number of absentees. In this respect Westport, Denniston, Reefton, and Motueka were the worst offenders. In the case of the last named, however, a severe outbreak of influenza in the district at the time of the examination affords a satisfactory excuse.

At the close of the year there were in the Board's employ 141 teachers and forty-one probationers. Of the head teachers, seventy-four are certificated and thirty-five uncertificated. Of the latter, twenty-seven are in charge of aided or household schools. Of thirty-two assistant teachers, twenty are certificated.

The following table is an abstract of the annual return, and is a general summary of results for the whole district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ..	142			
Standard VI.	412	397	230	13 11
" V	646	609	357	13 2
" IV	604	577	346	12 0
" III.	855	814	596	10 11
" II. ..	759	732	653	9 6
" I.	786	759	706	8 6
Preparatory	1,827			
Totals	6,031	3,888	2,888	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

No separate list of failures is now kept, nor are exceptions recorded, so that the pass-list appears small in comparison with the number present in standards, because in the latter are included those who have not made half attendances and who would formerly have been classed as exceptions. A general feeling of relief has been experienced on finding that the objectionable percentages of passes and failures also are now entirely abolished.

Another very important change is that the examination of Standards I. and II. in pass-subjects is placed entirely in the hands of the head teachers, who are now the sole arbiters of the passing of the children in those classes, provided, of course, that they attend the examination in class-subjects also. We have no doubt that the power thus conferred has been wisely, although often unwillingly, used by many of our teachers, but the weak-kneed, the injudicious, and the indulgent have, we fear, by indiscriminate passing, been preparing a rod for their own backs in the shape of extra difficulties in the tuition of the ensuing year The fact of the duty being shared among so many different examiners, all strongly interested, and each assessing his own work, nullifies, in our opinion, for all purposes of comparison, the value of the results produced. If the results of the head-teachers' examinations were not recorded, greater freedom of classification would ensue, as teachers would be free to present or withhold pupils from Standard III. examination as they thought fit, and there would be no inducement to swell the Inspector's figures with their own. The interest of the public, the unwise zeal of parents, the anxiety of the children, and their interest in what is new are all powerful incentives towards the promotion of pupils to a higher grade. The contrary tendency—that of teachers to withhold capable children from examination in order to secure better results in future years—now receives an additional safeguard in that "passes" only are recorded, but even that check is scarcely necessary in this district at least, where such a practice is almost unknown.

Non-presentation in Standard I of Children over Eight Years of Age.—The number of children this year returned in this section is 217 and the causes for their non-presentation being arranged under the three heads of irregularity of attendance, shortness of school life, and exceptional dullness, the corresponding numbers are eighty-nine, seventy, and fifty-eight respectively The number returned as irregular attendants is an increase on that of the previous

year, but this is probably due to the unusual number of wet days, combined with the prevalence of epidemics throughout the year

Considering the stringency of the new regulations, which have to a large extent been the outcome of the Inspectors' Conference held in January last, satisfactory examinations have been passed by the majority of our schools. Many of the larger ones, notably Motueka, Waimangaroa, Richmond Girls', Motupipi, Richmond Boys', Brooklyn, and Riwaka have come out of the trying ordeal with flying colours, whilst of the smaller we cannot in justice omit mention of such excellence as was shown at Hope, Merrijigs, Upper Motupiko, Ferntown, Woodstock, Upper Takaka, Pokororo, Sunnyside, Anatoki, and Wairoa.

The work of all the infant schools may be briefly summarised as good. We have in some instances pointed out where it might still be improved by working more on kindergarten lines, interspersing with the ordinary routine action songs, physical exercises and school drill performed to music, and by enlivening the school walls with pictures, everything being done to make the course as varied and cheerful as possible. Believing that the development of the mind should be the chief aim from the very beginning, we entirely deprecate dependence on memory alone and the incessant repetition of tables without obtaining a knowledge of their meaning.

In the case of fifteen schools, after making due allowance for an examination which in some respects was more exacting than its predecessors, your Inspectors have been constrained to express marked disapprobation. To the condition of some of these the special attention of the Committees concerned has also been directed, so that a decided improvement will be looked for next year

We append a short criticism on the general treatment which the chief subjects in the syllabus receive:—

Reading.—As a rule our children read fluently and in our best schools with due emphasis and expression. We have, though, to complain in too many instances of the want of thoroughness in the preparation of the matter of the reading-books, the meaning of the words and phrases being but little understood. Such a course renders the practice of reading of little value as an intellectual training. A clear knowledge of the meaning and orthography of the words in the lesson should be conveyed to the pupil, so that every day adds to his vocabulary By such training the powers of observation and the invaluable habit of accuracy are cultivated. The practice of dropping the voice at every comma, though often reprimanded, still prevails in a few schools. We can specially commend Toi Toi Valley for fluency and expression, and Motueka for the evident pains that have been taken to obtain a pure pronunciation.

Writing.—The improvement in handwriting noticeable in former years still continues, and schools in which slovenly work is general are very rare, and consequently the more conspicuous. With the growth of the vertical style, which has done so much to increase legibility, we note in some schools an inclination to entirely disregard the position of the writer, and a sprawling unhealthy attitude is the result. Such a lapse must be guarded against, or serious consequences may ensue.

Arithmetic.—The examinations this year have disclosed unexpected weaknesses. In some schools the children have evidently in their daily work been allowed to depend too much on one another, with fatal effects upon accuracy when independent work is demanded. Another, and perhaps as serious a mistake, is that of teachers picking and choosing likely parts from their syllabus of work, instead of doing the whole honestly and systematically For example, on inspection visits we frequently find that teaching is given apparently from test cards alone, which are supplied for examination purposes only Above all, too many make it their sole aim that their pupils should pass the examination—that is, reach the minimum allowed, and appear perfectly satisfied when that object is achieved. The general deficiency in mental arithmetic also would indicate insufficient blackboard and oral work in giving the ordinary lesson. Should the fact of the tests being set by a central authority be the means of remedying, as it has to a great extent been the means of revealing, these faults we cannot reasonably regret the change.

Spelling.—Notwithstanding that the regulation this year appears very exacting, two mistakes being the extreme limit in eight lines of dictation, the children, as a rule, have proved quite equal to the tests imposed, and this subject may be considered one of the most satisfactory in the syllabus.

English.—Although composition, which of late years has very properly been elevated to the position of a pass-subject, is well taught in our best schools, it does not yet generally receive that consideration which so valuable a study demands. In a child's essay few of the graces of a finished style are ever looked for, but it is within the compass of every Sixth Standard pupil at least to write a few sentences upon an everyday topic, and express himself clearly and grammatically The new regulation for Standard IV provides for a more systematic treatment of the subject.

Drawing.—Now that the syllabus has been reduced to more reasonable limits, little complaint should be heard as to its burdensome nature, and no excuse can in future be accepted for omitting any branch prescribed. Freehand drawing is generally well done, and fair attempts are made with both geometric and drawing to scale, but we rarely find model drawing a success, the slight acquaintance with perspective that is necessary for the very simple objects attempted being usually conspicuous by its absence. As yet only one school has taken advantage of the permission given to enter candidates for the first-grade drawing examinations conducted by the Wellington Technical School.

Geography.—Probably as a result of the severe strictures made last year, considerable improvement is noticeable in the treatment of this subject, but the work of the higher standards does not yet show the marked advance upon that of the lower that is usually found in other branches of study. The best results are usually found in those schools in which the teaching is chiefly oral. Map drawing is a specialty of some, more particularly of Reefton, Motueka, and Black's Point.

Grammar.—Where this subject is not neglected its treatment is too often unscientific, the work rarely rising above what is expected from Fourth Standard children. That of the Toi Toi Valley pupils was a notable exception. Instead of elementary analysis being taken as a basis for grammatical teaching, the reverse appears to be the case, with the result that the answers to questions on simple analysis and parsing, especially in the matters of syntax, often betrayed an utter want of grasp of the subject.

History and *elementary science* are very generally and successfully taught, the latter being with the children probably the most popular subject in the syllabus. The two or three schools which have not made history a prominent part of their school course are obviously at a great disadvantage in the scholarship examinations, in which it is a subject for competition. As the present regulations allow the teacher the choice of his own syllabus, "a list of twenty-five persons and events," the entire omission of such instruction must be the result of neglect rather than of any religious objections, as debatable ground can so easily be avoided. *Object-lessons* are taught in a variety of ways, often very effectively, but they do not generally serve as they are intended to do, as an introduction to science lessons. The aim of the teacher should be to excite by his description the child's interest in things around him, and by allowing him to see, touch, taste, or smell the objects submitted to him, to induce him to note their points of similarity or difference, and so to encourage a spirit of scientific inquiry

Drill, though well taught in many of our schools, is not nearly so general as we should like to see it, indeed, there is no reason why it should not form an important part of every school course. Some, on moral grounds, may question the advantages of military drill; but no instructor of the young can doubt the advisability of teaching both physical and school drill. The latter is to some extent practised in every well-conducted school as an aid to discipline; and, fortunately for the youth of the present day, the time has arrived when neglect of physical culture is regarded as highly censurable. Physical drill combined with field sports is the best instrument the teacher has at his command for aiding the development of healthy frames and counteracting in his pupils the ill-effects attending sedentary habits.

Singing is now taught in forty-six schools, in a few instances systematically, the children being able to read a little at sight and to sing in parts, but, generally, nothing is attempted beyond a simple melody, learnt by note or by ear It is not too much to expect that in a large school no subject in the syllabus should be omitted, and with that view it is desirable that at least one member of the staff should be qualified to teach this subject.

We cannot bring this report to a close without expressing our appreciation of the valuable services rendered to the cause of education by the late Inspector, Mr W C. Hodgson. This has been the more deeply impressed upon us on our inspection tours by the general feeling of esteem for his character and regret for his death which we find to prevail among all sorts and conditions of those among whom his duties have led him. We, his successors, also desire to acknowledge our indebtedness to him as the pioneer of education in this district, which owes its organization mainly to him, the growth of which has been contemporaneous with his long term of service, and which he left in such a high state of efficiency.

We have, &c.,
G. A. Harkness, M.A., } Inspectors.
Walter Ladley, }

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

GREY

Sir,—

I have the honour to report that the annual examination of all the schools under the Board, twenty-four in number, is now completed. The examinations commenced on the 18th October, and were completed on the 10th December I am pleased to state that I was able to adhere to the date fixed by me for the examination of each school, so that no disappointment was caused to the teachers or children. The result of the examination and my report on the same have in each instance been forwarded to the head teacher within a few days of the examination. They will have had, therefore, the advantage of being able to reorganize their schools at once, and to start work for the next year

I have also prepared reports on the buildings, &c., of each school, which will be laid before you. These show that the buildings are, generally speaking, in a bad condition, and in dealing with these reports I would direct the attention of the Board to the fact that in drawing them up I have suggested repairs only which are really necessary to put them in anything like an efficient state. I trust, therefore, that the Board's finances will enable them to give full effect to the recommendations indicated. The schools are as a rule badly arranged as regards convenience for working and also as regards light. In building any new ones these points should receive considerable attention. At some future time, when the Board s finances allow it, I intend to suggest alterations in several schools, which would have a very beneficial effect on the working of them.

The regulations of the Board sadly need revision, and should include tables for teachers' salaries, scale of staff of assistants, and scale of payments to School Committees. These, when adopted by the Board and carried out, would render the working of the schools a great deal more harmonious.

I was much struck with the lack of uniformity and any particular system throughout the district, a great many of the teachers appearing to act according to their own particular inclination. In some few schools excellent method is shown, whilst in others there is very little, and in some none at all. Care, neatness, methodical setting out of work ruled in with red ink must be insisted on. Proper rulers should be provided, as in several instances the children used their slates for this purpose.

Owing to there having been no system adopted hitherto in the arrangement of dates for examination, and to the fact that a great many of the schools were not reorganized until the month of April in this year, I experienced considerable difficulty in arranging the dates so as to allow all the schools to have a fair working year, my own time for completing the examinations being limited as well.

I had exceptionally good attendances at the examinations, the numbers being considerably in excess of those indicated to me, which were based on the average attendance for the previous quarter There was one instance where a large proportion of the class was absent, the chief reason assigned being the unwillingness of the parents to allow their children to sit for examination. The children were induced, however, to present themselves next day on a written request being made to the parents by the head teacher If this kind of thing was carried to any extent it would become very serious. I would point out to all parents the absolute necessity there is for their children to be present at the annual examination, as by its means they can form an opinion of the progress made, and the Board are able to judge of the capabilities of any particular teacher whereas the mere fact of their children not being present tends in a great measure to bring discredit on that person, which I am sure parents would not wish to do. Again, if the children are capable of passing their standard, it is far better for them to go on, instead of remaining in a class where there is none for them to compete with, and where their work would become monotonous and tend to laziness, and if they fail, it still does good, for they work harder next year and the amount of nervousness and excitement inseparable from an examination is considerably reduced.

The discipline of the schools, with two exceptions, is good, and the manners of the children also. In every school the pupils should be taught to salute the teacher on entry and exit, with a few exceptions the salute is given, but with a lack of smartness.

Reading.—In the majority of schools this is a rather weak subject, especially in the smaller ones in a few cases it has degenerated into a mere utterance of the words. A certain amount of emphasis and intonation must be insisted on. Comprehension is also rather weak. Teachers must insist on all answers to questions being put into a complete sentence, and refuse to accept anything else. I hope to see great improvement in these subjects.

Writing is on the whole poor, the most noticeable faults being that it is disjointed and sloped irregularly In a few schools, notably Greymouth and Taylorville, some exceptionally good writing was produced. The vertical style has been introduced to the lower classes with excellent results. In one or two instances the instructions sent out *re* this style were misunderstood, and it was introduced to all classes, of course with disastrous effect.

Arithmetic.—This subject has been the weak one with the two higher standards during the present examinations, and the direct cause of most of the failures in them. In the lower four standards the subject was, as a rule, fairly well treated. I should strongly advise all teachers to adopt the unitary method as far as possible, as being more easily understood and teaching the children to employ their reasoning powers. The most common error was the wrong statement of sums involving proportion.

Geography.—This subject is fairly well treated in most cases. A great deal more attention must be given to the geography of the district in Standard III., this being especially weak with few exceptions. Map drawing is poor, though in three or four cases they were excellently done. The spelling of geographical names is generally bad. I would recommend all schools to be furnished with a map of the district. There is one in the Grey school which might be copied for this purpose. A few schools possess no globe, which should also be rectified.

Drawing.—This must be considered the weakest subject, inasmuch as the syllabus has been practically ignored. This, no doubt, arises from the fact of the late Inspector having notified he should not adhere to it. This should not be, and the subject must be thoroughly worked up from Standard I. Some of the drawing, however, showed considerable merit. Generally speaking, only freehand is attempted. In one school the lower classes received no instruction whatever in this subject, whilst the higher ones only did geometrical. In but one or two schools was the syllabus well complied with. I would recommend the Board to adopt Blair's Colonial Drawing-books for use in the schools, as at present some use one kind and some another I would advise teachers not to trust entirely to these books for bringing their pupils to a state of proficiency in this subject, but, if possible, to let them also have plain drawing-books of fairly stiff cartridge paper (to be obtained at 3d. each), in which they could work geometrical problems, and do scale, freehand, or model drawing. For greater exercise in these latter branches of the subject I recommend the use of Bacon's Graduated Drawing-charts, which should be furnished to each school. All schools requiring them should be provided with a set of models.

Composition is fairly done as a rule. The children should be encouraged to write on a larger variety of subjects, as some of their work has the appearance of being purely mechanical.

Spelling and Dictation.—In the majority of schools these subjects are well treated.

Grammar is generally rather on the weak side, and demands considerable attention, especially in Standards III. and IV.

History.—Generally speaking, this subject has been well treated on the broad lines laid down.

Recitation.—In a few schools where the children recited with movement some excellent results were produced, but, as a rule, this was not the case, and it was sorry work listening to child after child merely say its piece like a parrot. In the smaller schools I would recommend the teachers to group the whole school together for this subject, and let them do two or three pieces with movement, and have them well done. The children can easily be taught to recite singly as well.

Singing.—Greymouth is the only school where this subject is taught according to the syllabus, and deserves great credit for the state of efficiency to which it is brought. In the majority of the schools it receives no attention at all. I should like to see the subject introduced in all schools. With a very little time the children can be taught to sing one or two songs together, and it is time well spent, being an occasional relaxation from their other more monotonous work.

Object-lessons.—These are given with fairly good effect, a more extended course would, however, be beneficial, and, with this end in view, I would recommend Ricks's two books on "Object-lessons, and how to give them," to all teachers' notice.

Science.—Where taught, this subject is treated as well as can be expected. In all the smaller schools, where the chances of practical illustration are remote, I would recommend teachers to substitute the second series of Ricks's work, as being generally of more use to the children in after life.

Standards I and II.—This is the first year in which head teachers have had the privilege of passing or failing the pupils of these classes. There is a decided tendency to let the children through, noticeable more especially in the smaller schools. The fallacy of this will be very apparent when the children come to Standard III., and for the weakness of that class the teachers alone will be to blame. In only one case was there any tendency to go the other way and I applaud this teacher in having the courage to forego a high percentage in order that his school may be strong.

The primer classes are generally well taught. In the smaller schools they are scarcely far enough advanced. In order to have a strong school the upper primer class should be able to pass Standard I. before they are removed into it.

Before closing this report I should like to say a few words with reference to the carpentry class at the Grey District High School. This is a great acquisition, and the instruction the boys are receiving in it will be highly beneficial to them in after life. The thanks of the Board are due to Mr Arnott for his praiseworthy and untiring zeal in the matter The boys are turning out excellent work, and I was highly gratified at the neat and orderly appearance of the workshop. The Board would do well to give every encouragement in its power to this class of work. Is it not possible that such a one might be started at Taylorville, or even in connection with smaller schools? Energetic Committees might do much in this respect, and it would be of infinite benefit to their children.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM L. F FETCH, Inspector

The Chairman, Education Board, Greymouth.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	51			.
Standard VI. ..	86	82	58	14 2
" V	185	176	89	13 3
" IV	182	177	95	12 1
" III.	218	212	163	11 1
" II.	175	174	130	9 5
" I.	178	174	161	8 4
Preparatory	569			
Totals	1,644	995	696	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

WESTLAND.

SIR,— Hokitika, 19th February, 1895.

I have the honour to present the following report for the year 1894.

During the year inspection visits were made to other than aided schools, and all schools in the northern part of the district were examined. The annual visit to South Westland was deferred, and the schools of that part of the district have been examined since the close of the year The attendance of the pupils has been unusually irregular, owing to the prevalence of epidemics. Progress has thus been checked. While the number of passes obtained is satisfactory, the work of the pupils has been rendered incomplete in a number of schools. The larger schools, with staffs of skilled teachers, and the household schools, where the attention of the teachers is concentrated on very few scholars, are in general the most efficient. The schools of from ten to forty scholars, in which the charge of a number of standard classes falls on one teacher, more frequently show that a difficulty has been found in mastering the requirements of the code of instruction. While this is to some extent unavoidable, the teachers will find, in view of the allowance for such conditions made by the regulations, that the exercise of method and forethought will enable them to achieve success. The efficiency of some of these schools should encourage the teachers of others to employ greater and more systematic effort.

Very satisfactory improvement has been effected by some teachers in the instruction given in reading. Teachers are still to be found, however, who fail to understand that this subject requires the exercise of skill and forethought to secure satisfactory results. Too often the pupils are merely "heard read," the process consisting mainly of interjected corrections in which reprimand takes the place of encouragement and intelligent direction. In comprehension of the reading matter of the lessons the pupils of some schools are lamentably weak. Evidence is thus afforded of very perfunctory teaching in both reading and spelling. It is the intention of the Board to provide during the year for a supply of extra reading-books, and this provision for an extended course should assist the teachers to secure better results.

Of several schools a strong feature is the attention paid to the writing of the scholars. Too

frequently, however, the writing in copy-books, exercise-books, and examination papers is careless and unsatisfactory System in teaching and insistence on careful attention to detail at all times will quickly remedy the defects so much in evidence at present.

The arithmetic questions have this year been set by the Education Department. As these tests are on the average equal in standard to those previously set in this district, the results have been generally satisfactory The attention in the preparatory classes to numerical exercises and tables is still insufficient, although in a few schools improvement has been effected. Mental arithmetic was usually well worked, but requires more attention in Standard V

In connection with composition, the use of paraphrasing has been much neglected, and the requirements in regard to synthesis of sentences in Standard IV were hardly understood by many teachers. These exercises are of great utility in teaching the subject, and should receive more attention. While in grammar the results are, on the whole, only fair, there is considerable improvement in the grammatical correctness of the composition exercises. The test in composition usually consisted partly of an exercise chosen from the programme presented by the teacher, and partly of an independent test. The results were mostly satisfactory

The weak point in the curriculum of many of the schools is the neglect of the studies that afford an opportunity to develop in the pupils powers of observation and comparison. The definitions and other requirements of geography outside of topography, the knowledge of geometrical form required in the lower standards, elementary science, and object-lessons, are all more or less omitted from the course by the teachers of the schools referred to. Among the reasons for this neglect may be placed want of skill and experience on the part of the teachers and the possibility of passing pupils in spite of these omissions. The regulations require that a reasonable amount of interest should be taken in these parts of the syllabus of instruction. It is necessary, too, to point out that the mere cramming of definitions will not be accepted as a substitute for good teaching. It frequently occurred that lessons were given on subjects capable of being readily illustrated by the exhibition of common objects or pictures without any such provision being made for so essential an aid to education. Agricultural chemistry has been adopted, with success, by several teachers for the science course. It is desirable, however, that memorising a catechism on the subject should not replace suitable teaching by means of such illustration and experiment as circumstances permit.

The instruction given to freehand drawing is generally satisfactory Geometrical and scale drawing are occasionally found well mastered, but thorough teaching of these is not very general. During the year models have been supplied to the larger schools, and an effort, very slight in some cases, has been made to overtake the model drawing. Very few teachers have, however, qualified themselves to give instruction in this branch of the subject. Those who are unable to secure second-grade certificates in drawing should at least obtain the knowledge required to enable them to conduct their pupils through the standard course.

In reference to other subjects of the syllabus, I may add that, while singing is well taught in the larger schools, drill and other physical training meet with almost total neglect. In one or two schools drill is well taught, but beyond this no physical education is provided for, either by the devotion of school time to suitable instruction and exercise or by the supply of gymnastic apparatus. This neglect is a serious defect in the educational work of the district.

The teachers in several of the larger schools exercised the privilege of examining the pupils of Standards I. and II., and in most cases discretion was displayed in the promotions made. The tendency in a few instances was to promote too readily—a course that will seriously affect the efficiency of the schools in the future.

Very satisfactory improvement has been shown in the instruction given to the preparatory classes, although the attention given to object-lessons is still insufficient. The number of pupils over eight years old retained in this division of the schools is somewhat high. The improvement recorded in the instruction should reduce this number In the meantime, it may be well to point out that, while the reasons given for this want of progress were often satisfactory, such excuses as "slowness," "indolence," "unawakened intellect," merely furnish a severe criticism on the teacher's methods.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Westland. A. J. Morton, Inspector.

Summary of Results for the Whole District.

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
High School class	10			
Above Standard VI.	29			
Standard VI. ..	80	78	69	14 4
" V .	134	127	104	13 5
" IV	189	171	150	11 9
" III. .	206	197	166	11 4
" II.	179	178	164	9 10
" I.	188	186	172	8 8
Preparatory	470			
Totals	1,485	937	825	11 1*

* Mean of average age.

N.B.—The results of eleven schools of South Westland are omitted from the above return.

NORTH CANTERBURY

SIR,— Christchurch, 1st February, 1895.

We have the honour to submit the annual return for the year 1894 of the schools in the North Canterbury District, in accordance with the regulations in force under the Education Act. The appended summary and details contain the information required by Regulation 12. In the tables embodied in this report the results are further collected and condensed in a form convenient for comparison, and we trust the information to be obtained from these tables will be found of sufficient value to recompense the labour of compiling them.

During the year all the schools in operation (179) were examined in full detail, and one (not reckoned again in the return) was examined a second time to bring the annual test of the children's progress to a more convenient season. The school attached to the Burnham Industrial Institution was also examined as usual on behalf of the Department of Education.

In the Board's schools 21,095 children were presented for examination, a number slightly in advance of last year's total. Of this number, 19,795 were present on the days of examination, 11,814 satisfied the requirements of their various standards (Standard I. to Standard VI.), and 2,427 failed to do so, with or without the explanation of insufficient attendance.

On the 1st July certain modifications of the regulations came into force on very short notice. The changes then made were chiefly the transfer of geography in the Fourth Standard from the class to the pass group of subjects, and of grammar entirely to the class group, the instalment of mental arithmetic as a separate class subject, the omission of any reference to "failures" and "exceptions" and to calculation of percentages in this connection, an alteration in the form of report to be made on class and additional subjects, and a provision for the examination of the two lowest standards in pass-subjects by the head teacher of the school, with another provision requiring the Inspector to include in his report his judgment of the degree of discretion displayed in determining the passes in these standards.

Before July forty-two schools had already been examined, and in the examinations conducted throughout the remainder of the year it was thought desirable in the form of report to retain still some of the earlier features (not inconsistent with the new directions), partly for the sake of continuity and comparison, and partly (as in the case of class-subjects and "exceptions") because we could see no adequate reason for a change.

The transfer of the "pass" examination in Standards I. and II. from the Inspector to the head teacher, characterized in the last report of the Hon. the Minister of Education as an "important experiment," and stated (though subject to some correction) as made on the recommendation of the Inspectors of Schools, has enabled us to conduct the examination in a few of the larger schools in the English fashion "by sample", but in the vast majority of cases the duties of the Inspectors in the examination of these classes are much the same as before. Of "the degree of discretion displayed we have only occasionally expressed a judgment, and have generally contented ourselves with stating what we believe to be of very much more value—namely, our judgment of the character of the instruction generally or in the details of the subjects. We cannot see that any officially-recognised pass examination of individual children in these standards is at all necessary, and we should prefer to leave the matter entirely to the master, who would promote his children at his discretion (of course, subject to criticism) on the experience derived from a year's intercourse, and not as the result of any one formal examination. In applying the regulation the teachers have generally shown themselves more anxious to obtain a suitable classification of their children than to create an impression of successful teaching, though occasionally we have not been able to approve of the standard adopted, and most frequently, where any doubt has existed in their minds, the doubtful case has been reserved for the Inspector's judgment on his arrival.

The issue during the year of examination tests in arithmetic by the Education Department—due to a desire for a uniform standard in so important a subject—has brought clearly before our teachers the necessity of devoting more attention to certain features which, partly out of deference to a public opinion not in sympathy with "arithmetical puzzles, and partly with the object of keeping well within the lines likely to be approved by a higher authority came either in the course of years to occupy a less prominent position or were considered possibly open to criticism in respect of the prescribed limits, and consequently avoided.

I.—PASS-SUBJECTS NUMBERS.

Classes.	Number presented.	Number present.	Number excepted.	Number failed.	Number passed.	Number of Schools presenting.	Average Age of those that passed.
							Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	243	155				68	
Standard VI.	1,186	1,145	18	170	957	145	13 11
" V ..	2,001	1,929	61	419	1,449	160	13 0
" IV	2,921	2,794	111	636	2,047	172	12 1
" III.	3,192	3,062	124	586	2,352	176	11 0
" II.	2,829	2,730	62	139	2,529	167	9 9
" I.	2,676	2,581	21	80	2,480	174	8 8
Preparatory	6,047	5,399				178	
Totals for 1894	21,095	19,795	397	2,030	11,814	179	11 5*
Totals for 1893	21,059		389	1,833	11,343	179	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

II.—Pass-subjects Numbers reduced to Percentages.

Classes.	School-roll.	Class-roll.			Passed, 1894.		Passed, 1893.	
	Presented.	Present.	Excepted.	Failed.	School-roll.	Class-roll.	School-roll.	Class-roll.
Above Standard VI.	1·2	63·8						
Standard VI.	5·6	96·5	1·5	14·3	4·5	80·7	4·1	80·5
" V	9·5	96·4	3·0	20·9	6·9	72·4	6·3	73·8
" IV.	13·8	95·7	3·8	21·8	9·7	70·1	9·2	66·9
" III.	15·2	95 9	3·9	18·3	11 1	73·7	11 1	72·5
" II.	13·4	96·5	2·2	4·9	12·0	89·4	11·8	85·3
" I.	12·7	96·4	0·8	3·0	11·8	92·7	11·4	86·5
Preparatory	28·7	89·3		...	....	..		
On totals .	100·0	93·8	2·7	13·7	56·0	79·8	53·9	77·3

Though the omission of any reference to percentages of passes and failures in the record of individual schools has our sympathy and has probably had already a good result, there is no reason to omit anything of the kind that we have hitherto been in the habit of giving in the statistical tables for the whole district. These are therefore drawn on much the same lines as in previous years, and contain besides the numbers in the several classes a full calculation of corresponding percentages. The proportion of children on the roll who have passed in Standards I. to VI. is 56—an increase of 2·14 on the year 1893, but substantially the same as for the year preceding, in which there were no exceptional circumstances. Something, however, has to be set down for an apparent advance in Standards I. and II., where, probably, on the whole, the teacher's standard has been a more lenient one.

In the proportions presented in different parts of the school the same tendency is again seen to which reference has been made in former reports; but the steady and gradual change is particularly striking when the figures for a series of years, as given below, are set out together for comparison.

Proportions per Cent. of Roll-number included in—

——	Standard IV and upwards.	Standards I., II., and III.	Preparatory Division.	Mean of Average Age. Standards I. to VI.
				Yrs. mos.
1886	17 1	45·5	37·4	11 10
1887	18·2	45·9	36·0	11 9
1888	19·3	45·9	34·7	11 8
1889	20·4	44·6	35·0	11 8
1890 ...	22·4	44·8	32·3	11 8
1891 ..	24·4	44·3	31·3	11 7
1892	26·1	43·9	30·0	11 6
1893	28·2	42·3	29·5	11 6
1894	30·1	41·2	28·7	11 5

Boys and girls may find a greater difficulty than before in getting suitable "places," and so remain at school longer, or it may be that the instruction in the lower classes has been gradually improving in efficiency, but, whatever the full explanation may be, it is gratifying to find a regularly increasing proportion of children receiving instruction in the less elementary part of the primary-school course.

Among the 6,047 children included in the preparatory division, 927, or 4·4 per cent. of the school-roll, were eight years of age or over at the date of examination. The reasons given for not presenting these children for examination in the First Standard were generally such as we could accept with approval or acquiescence.

III.—Class and Additional Subjects General.

Class-subjects.							Additional Subjects.	
Subject.	Average Marks (0–100).	Number of Schools obtaining Marks.					Subject	Number of Schools.
		60 and upwards.	50 to 60.	30 to 50.	Under 30.	Total.		
Grammar	63·1	33	42	69	33	177	Repetition of poetry	179
History	44·5	35	51	62	29	177	Drill	136
Geography	58·2	92	32	38	7	169	Singing	141
Science, object lessons, &c.	45·5	42	57	51	28	178	Sewing	173
Mental arithmetic	32·8	9	23	46	59	137	Subject-matter and comprehension of reading-lessons	179

IV.—Class-subjects Comparison of School Groups.

Subject.	In Twenty-eight "Town" Schools.			In Eighty-one Schools of Intermediate Size.			In Seventy Single-handed Schools.		
	Average Marks (0–100).	Obtaining Fifty Marks and upwards.		Average Marks. (0–100).	Obtaining Fifty Marks and upwards.		Average Marks (0–100).	Obtaining Fifty Marks and upwards.	
		Number of Schools.	Proportion of Schools.		Number of Schools.	Proportion of Schools.		Number of Schools.	Proportion of Schools.
Grammar	51·6	19	0·68	43·4	34	0·44	39·6	22	0·31
History	57·2	22	0·79	44·8	40	0·52	39·7	25	0·36
Geography	66·3	24	0·86	60·4	63	0·80	51·9	37	0·61
Elementary science, object-lessons, &c.	56·8	23	0·82	48·5	50	0·62	38·1	25	0·36
Mental arithmetic	39·1	7	0·30	33·6	19	0·27	28·5	6	0·14
On total	55·4	20	0·71	46·4	31	0·39	40·1	14	0·20

Note.—A "town" school is taken to be one with at least three adult or certified teachers employed in it. In defining single-handed schools, a sewing-mistress is not reckoned. The "proportions" are on the number of schools of each group for which marks were recorded.

A numerical estimate of the value of each class-subject in a school is no longer prescribed, but this feature we have thought it best to retain, though at the cost of considerable labour, chiefly because we conceive the importance of this body of the school work demands a definite, if only approximate, estimate of its value.

In considering the average marks given above, it has to be kept in mind that these are obtained by taking first the average attainment in the subject of the children of a class, then the average of the classes in the school, and finally the average of the schools. The resulting marks are therefore necessarily not high. For a school 60 to 65 per cent. may be considered good, and for a group of schools of all sorts an average of 50 per cent. would give good ground for satisfaction. Viewed in this light the marks recorded approach nearer a satisfactory limit than might appear at first sight to a casual glance, but we cannot pretend that generally the subjects to which the marks apply are as earnestly and effectively treated as those which the concentration of public attention on "the passes" of a school raises to a position of exclusive importance, and we very much doubt the policy of requiring from all kinds of schools a number of subjects of which the treatment in many cases must be merely perfunctory From the standpoint of moral influence as well as of economy of effort to acquiesce in slipshod work is to do harm, and nothing should be required to be undertaken at all that is not required to be done well. In geography it may be noted that the mark would be higher were the Second Standard only reckoned in the schools examined before the 1st July. The mental arithmetic we expect to get a good deal better, of the grammar we have no such hope.

Inspection.—During the past year we have been able again to overtake the work of inspection, which, though equally important with the examination of the schools, had to give way before it when the whole became too much for the Inspectors employed. All the schools, with the exception of two in the Kaikoura district, received separate visits of inspection, and were reported on in due course. The Inspector's visit on these occasions may not have much to show for it, but we trust its value will continue to rise in the estimation of those in authority Even admitting that the Inspector's departure from a school is borne with a good deal of patient resignation on the part of the staff, still, in many instances, his visit is hailed with acceptance by teachers desirous of discussing their methods, doubtful about some detail of organization, or uncertain as to the scope of requirements in subjects of examination. There is also reason to believe that sometimes the casual visit has had its use in preventing or removing at least a part of the friction incidental to school business.

Among the matters to which attention is specially directed during a visit of inspection time-tables and methods of instruction occupy a prominent place. In the construction of most of the time-tables there is little to criticize. The hours of school work are in the main judiciously apportioned among the various subjects of instruction, and, so far at least as the pass-subjects are concerned, the programme appears to be faithfully carried out during the year The cases where the want of punctual adherence to the time-table provisions came under the notice of the Inspector have been very few; but we have reason to believe that the practice of postponing some of the class-subject work till the latter part of the year is not uncommon.

So far as an estimate may be arrived at from the indications at inspection, satisfactory methods of instruction are very generally known and adopted throughout the district. A few older teachers probably continue to prefer methods not quite in keeping with modern ideas, but in most instances of this nature personal influence is so effective, and the industry of the teacher so commendable, that satisfactory results have usually been attained. It may here be remarked, however, that during an inspection visit teachers not unfrequently find it convenient either to revise lessons previously given or to keep their classes employed at silent work. An aspirant for promotion could not easily find a means more effective than this in barring claims to advancement, as it ought to be obvious that marks for skill in teaching cannot well be assigned on the strength of such perform-

ances. The free play of question and answer in oral teaching, where the interest of the children is awakened, their intelligence cultivated, and their mode of expressing themselves improved, shows a teacher in his best aspect, and it is particularly in this respect that the evidence both of inspection and of examination points to the need of improvement.

We have, &c.,
L. B. Wood, M.A.
W J Anderson, LL.D. } Inspectors.
Thos. Ritchie, B.A.

The Chairman, Education Board, North Canterbury

SOUTH CANTERBURY

Sir,— Education Office, Timaru, 19th March, 1895.

I have the honour to present my report on the schools in this district for the year 1894.

Sixty-two schools were in operation at the close of the year, being an increase of three over last year's number The reopening of the school at Otaio, and the establishment of new schools at Hannaton and Station Creek account for the increase. Three new school districts were proclaimed, namely, Kapua, Pareora Village Settlement, and Orari Gorge. The Otaio School, which was opened in the latter part of the year, was not examined, as the children had been already presented at neighbouring schools. Sixty-one schools were examined and reported on, and inspection visits were paid to all but a few of the schools in the earlier part of the year

The following table shows the results of the examinations for the whole district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	99			..
Standard VI. ..	255	249	176	13 10
" V	464	447	309	13 0
" IV ..	652	619	400	12 1
" III.	730	707	545	11 0
" II.	681	660	640	9 10
" I.	703	676	663	8 9
Preparatory	1,527			
Totals for 1894.	5,111	3,358	2,733	
Totals for 1893.	5,009	3,187	2,602	

The number of pupils presented on the examination schedules was 5,111, of whom 99 had already passed the Sixth Standard, 1,527 were in the preparatory classes, and 3,485 were entered for examination in Standards I. to VI Of the 3,485 in Standards I. to VI., 3,358 were present on the day of examination, and 2,733 passed.

In accordance with the new regulations the passes in Standards I. and II. were determined by the head teachers, and, for the purpose of ascertaining what pupils were fit to pass, the head teachers were enjoined to examine those classes immediately before the examination held by the Inspector To make the pass effective, the pupils require to be present in class during the Inspector's examination in class-subjects. While the determining of the pass rests with the teacher, it does not follow, as was very generally supposed, that the Inspector is relieved of the duty of examining these classes in pass-subjects. In every examination report of a school the Inspector must give his opinion as to the degree of discretion displayed by the teacher in the determining of the passes in Standards I. and II., and in order to form an opinion he must himself examine the pupils. When the classes are very large he may not consider it necessary to give to each pupil's work in every subject the close attention which was formerly demanded class examination instead of individual examination will generally suffice. But in this district large classes are the exception and in about fifty of our schools my examination of the First and Second Standards has been carried out very much in the same way as in former years. The proportion of passes in these classes is a little higher than in past years, for here and there a teacher, yielding to the temptation of having as large a number of passes as possible, or perhaps dreading an interview with an angry parent, has awarded passes which had been more wisely withheld, both for the children's sake and for his own. Taken as a whole, however, the teachers showed that they realised the responsible nature of the duty devolving on them, and displayed good judgment in the exercise of their new power

Of the 1,527 children in the preparatory classes, 262 were over eight years of age. Written explanations of the reasons for not presenting such children in Standard I. were submitted by the teachers, and from these it appears that 40 per cent. of the children were irregular attendants, 34 per cent. were comparatively recent admissions, and 26 per cent. were accounted too dull to be prepared for the examination. The total number, though slightly in excess of that of last year, will bear comparison with the numbers in the larger education districts that bound us on the north and south. With the sufficiency of the reasons assigned by the teachers I am pleased to say that I feel satisfied. So far as the teachers are concerned, I am confident they do their best to bring the children forward, their aim being to have as few as possible about whom explanations are to be given.

I have already referred to the important change in the regulations affecting the passes in the First and Second Standards. Considerable changes have also been made in the syllabus of instruction and in the form of the examination report. Among the former are to be noted the inclusion of geography as a pass-subject in the Fourth Standard, the extensive range of work formerly prescribed being appreciably curtailed by the transference of the mathematical section to the Fifth Standard the lessening of the demands in drawing of the higher standards, a concession gladly welcomed by the teachers, the introduction of mental arithmetic as a class-subject for Standards II. to VI., thus giving it a place of greater prominence, and increasing the chances of its receiving more special attention than when it was tacked on to the "pass" arithmetic, the substitution of the "comprehension of the language of the reading-lessons" for a 'knowledge of the subject-matter of the reading-lessons" as an additional subject in Standards I., II., and III., and its insertion as an additional subject in Standards IV., V., and VI. Rules also for determining passes in spelling, dictation, and arithmetic are laid down, less stringent in spelling and dictation than formerly obtained in this district, but a little more severe in arithmetic. In the examination report the columns for "exceptions" and "failures" have been done away with, and the "percentage of failures" and the much maligned "percentage of passes" are no more to be mentioned. The report now shows the number presented, the number present in each standard class, and the number passed. Formerly marks were assigned for class and additional subjects, but now the Inspector has to express in words his opinion of the quality and value of the work done in these subjects, which include as class-subjects, grammar, history, geography (of Standard II.), science and object-lessons, and mental arithmetic, and as additional subjects, recitation, drill, singing, needlework, and comprehension of the language of the reading-lessons. The face of the report contains a space for notes on the character of the instruction in the preparatory class and Class X., the former including all children below the First Standard and the latter all above the Sixth. My report of each school has also included a criticism of the examination as a whole, prominently setting forth whatever was deserving of commendation and calling attention to shortcomings of a grave nature.

At the monthly meetings of the Board, my inspection reports dealing with the methods of instruction and other important matters relating to the schools have been read, and from these and the examination reports the Board has had full information with regard to the efficiency of the instruction, the discipline of the schools, and the manners of the children. The reports, with a few notable exceptions, have been generally favourable, and frequent mention has been made of excellent work done in spelling, dictation, writing, and drawing. In the majority of the schools much has yet to be done to improve the quality of the reading, which, though in most cases fluent and fairly distinct, leaves much to be desired in intelligence and expression. Great care should be taken in the matter of purity of utterance of the vowel sounds. While listening to the reading I am often vexed to find how closely our colonial children are approximating to the twist of the o's and a's that popular "coster" songs have made us familiar with. In most of the schools steady progress continues to be made in composition, and it is to be hoped that the making of the comprehension of the language of the reading-lessons a separate subject of instruction will give the children such practice in oral composition as will prove a very great aid to them in their written exercises. The grammar of the Third and Fourth Standards has been frequently reported on in favourable terms, but this has seldom happened with regard to the work of the two highest standards. Not only in smaller schools, but also in two or three of the largest schools, the quality of the work has been marked down as worthless. It is worthy of remark that the falling off in grammar was conspicuous in the last examination for scholarships, the competitors for which one might fairly assume are, within certain age limits, the champions of their respective schools. With the exception of arithmetic, the other subjects of instruction do not call for special comment, both in treatment and in results the features they present are in the main such as have been dealt with at some length in previous reports.

The arithmetic papers of Standards III. to VI. were this year worked from test-cards issued by the Education Department. To obtain the requisite number of right answers entitling to a pass in Standard VI. was generally found a harder task than it was when my own cards were used and I am sure the cards would have fulfilled their purpose quite as well with simpler sums and fewer of them. In Standards III., IV., and V the pupils were usually well prepared to cope with the difficulties of the general run of the sums set, but the cards, noticeably in Standard V., were not remarkable for evenness, some being much harder than others. In Standard III. the sums might have been more straightforward, involving more of computation and less of solving tiny arithmetical puzzles.

I am very pleased to state that I have very rarely reported unfavourably on the order and discipline of a school and the manners of the children. During my visits I almost invariably find the children prompt to obey honest in their work, and pleasing in their attitude towards their teachers and myself.

I have, &c.,

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector

The Chairman, Education Board, South Canterbury

OTAGO

SIR,—

We have the honour to submit the following report on the schools of the Otago Education District for the year 1894. All the schools were examined except one, which was closed when the Inspector was examining in its neighbourhood, and all were inspected. The few that were not inspected were closed when the Inspectors were working through the parts of the district in which they are situated. Though we worked on the average nearly ten hours a day from the commence-

ment of the examinations, we were unable to find time to examine the District High Schools in the higher work, and the pupil-teachers in the art of teaching.

The following table contains the principal statistics of examination for the year:—

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	489			
Standard VI.	1,300	1,272	1,169	13 11
" V	2,027	1,961	1,580	12 11
" IV	2,704	2,623	1,996	12 1
" III. ..	3 051	2,977	2,519	11 1
" II.	2,995	2,942	2,792	9 11
" I.	2,761	2,720	2,652	9 0
Preparatory	7,117			
Totals ...	22,444	14,495	12,708	11 6*

* Mean of average ages.

This table shows, over the corresponding statistics for 1893, an increase of 152 in the number of pupils presented for examination, of 680 on the number of pupils examined in one or other of the standards, and of 1,100 in the number of those that passed the standard for which they were presented. Of the increment in passes, Standard I. contributed 127 Standard II. 294, Standard III. 322, Standard IV 127 Standard V 161, and Standard VI. 69. More than half the increment was therefore contributed by Standard II. and Standard III.

Of the children examined in the standards, about 88 per cent. satisfied at least the requirements for a pass—that is to say, twenty-two out of twenty-five of them answered satisfactorily in not less than one-half to two-thirds of the work set them in the pass-subjects, or in all the pass-subjects except one. The ratio of passes to failures is therefore as 22 to 3 (= 7 to 1), a very high index of general efficiency Teachers who, under what is for dull children a heavy syllabus, succeed in qualifying for promotion to a higher class seven out of eight of their pupils should be regarded as doing good work. We should be well satisfied with a much lower "pass ratio" if a larger proportion of the passes were further removed from the border-line of failure. In a considerable number of our schools nearly all the work is good, sometimes very good, and even excellent, on the other hand, there is a considerable number in which English and object-lessons and science do not reach the level of merit that could, with good management and teaching, be attained without difficulty Science and object-lessons excepted, English is by far the weakest subject of the school course, and it is surprising how small is the number of teachers that are able to teach it well in all its branches. During the past year we devoted special attention to it, and in the course of our examination indicated methods of treatment that ought to tend to improve the quality of the teaching. Adequate knowledge is, however, as necessary as are good methods, and adequate knowledge can be acquired only by strenuous, well-directed study The subject is as difficult as it is important, and neither its difficulty nor its importance has yet received due recognition either from teachers or from education authorities.

In a large proportion of the schools the prepared books are generally read with fluency and accuracy and with taste, varying from fair to good. Apart from dialectic peculiarities, due chiefly to home environment, mispronunciation is rare, and seldom causes failure. Most of the failures are caused by the faults that almost invariably accompany hurried reading repetition of words and phrases, indistinct utterance, inaccurate phrasing, wrong emphasis or no emphasis. The reading test is generally confined to the books read during the year The lessons of these books are read and read until most of even the dullest pupils are letter perfect in them. This iteration and reiteration of the same words in the same sequence has a strong tendency to make the reading exercise mechanical, the reading too rapid, and the enunciation indistinct. Mental tension is a condition of good reading, but mental tension is out of the question when all freshness and interest are read out of a lesson. In reading, as in most other subjects, the pace of the class is too often regulated by the pace of the slowest pupils and that the slowest may be brought up to the level of a pass, the lessons are read so often as to produce in bright children utter weariness of the exercise. We expect to find in most classes from 15 to 20 per cent. of children whom no teacher can, without either overpressing them or sacrificing the interests of their class-fellows, keep in line with what may be called the average working capacity of the majority of the class. It is obviously unfair to keep back seven- or eight-tenths of the children for the remaining two- or three-tenths. The pace of a class should be regulated by the pace at which the bulk of its members can advance. Were this rule acted on, we should, no doubt, have more inferior work, but we should also have more good work, than we now have, and we should hear less about "cramming" and "reducing all children to a dead level of mediocrity" Of this we are sure that a large percentage of our children could profitably undertake and achieve, in every subject of the course, a much larger quantity of work than they now do. We do not counsel neglect of dull children, but we contend that, while not neglecting them, we should do the best we can with the more capable ones, and on no account allow the former to act as a powerful brake to the latter. For each class two reading-books are now prescribed. Most of the children could read a good deal more. If, instead of spending large sums every year in prizes, School Committees would spend the money in the purchase of sets of books (some of the cheap reprints now issuing from the press in such large numbers) to be kept in school and read there and only there, the gain to the children would, we

think, be very great. Such books would provide abundance of "unseen reading", no chapter being read more than once, every lesson would be fresh and stimulating, and the "sight" reading-lesson would come to be regarded by the children as the most delightful of all their exercises. The books should be read with the view to practice in reading, and to induce a taste and love for it. There should be no dwelling upon mistakes or grind of any sort, and there should enter into the exercise nothing that might tend to make it irksome. All "language grind" (of which there must necessarily be a good deal) should be confined to the "reader" or "readers" purchased by the children. One such "reader," if well chosen, would be sufficient for each child, if Committees purchased for each class two or three sets of books such as we are recommending. Our present plan has succeeded neither in making good "sight" readers nor in developing in our pupils a taste for reading, we ought, therefore, to cast about for another

The dictation and spelling exercises are generally well done, but there is a good deal of inferior spelling in the composition exercises and in the answers to the questions in geography The writing continues to suffer seriously from the careless scribbling allowed on the slates and in exercise-books, and we cannot help thinking that progress is retarded by the highly improper attitudes in which the children are allowed to sit and the unnatural way in which they are allowed to hold the pen. The improper sitting attitudes must be condemned also on grounds of hygiene. The diagrams supplied to the schools by the Board have not effected any improvement in this matter Vertical writing has been introduced in several schools, but it is an outstanding success in only five or six. It appears to require more thorough-going blackboard teaching than many teachers are prepared to give it. The drawings presented to us, representing the year's work of the children, are generally satisfactory, a considerable proportion of them being good, and some of them even excellent.

Though many children fail in arithmetic, the subject is, in the majority of schools, well treated. The teaching is, however, more abstract than it should be. For example, we seldom see in the middle and senior classes a new operation represented in the concrete. It is generally made a reasoned operation in the manipulation, not of things, but of symbols. The manipulation of things should go hand in hand with the manipulation of their symbols on the blackboard or on the slates. For this purpose the ball-frame can be made quite as useful in these as in the junior classes. Arithmetic must necessarily be very puzzling to those who cannot see the things behind their symbols. We have again to complain of the wretchedly illogical way in which many teachers allow their pupils to set out their work. It is difficult to convince such teachers that methods are more important than results. Mental arithmetic has recently been made a class-subject, and already there is, we regret to say, a marked decline in its quality

The quality of the composition varies a good deal. In schools in which the aim is high, and the grammar exercises are chosen with the view to exemplify points in sentence structure and sentence connection, it is generally very creditable, but in those in which the aim is low, and grammar is treated as having no bearing on composition, it is generally poor In the class reading-books are to be found exemplifications of a very large number of types of sentence structure, and it is with these that the grammar-lesson should chiefly deal. As indicating the nature of the connection of sentence to sentence, and, therefore, of thought to thought, the phraseology of reference (conjunctions, pronouns, and connective phrases) plays a very important part in composition, and is deserving of more attention than it receives. In a large number of schools too much reliance is, we think, placed on mere practice in writing. Practice and plenty of it there must be, but practice alone, though it may produce readiness in writing sentences of some sort, cannot produce excellence in composition. We feel sure that better results would be achieved if less time were given to "theme" writing, and more to instruction in sentence structure and sentence connection and to criticism of what the children write. In most schools the sole critic of the composition is the teacher, who marks and corrects every error in the exercises. The bulk of the gross mistakes are errors in the spelling of easy words, and in concord of subject and verb and of pronoun and antecedent, all of them errors such as might be detected and corrected by the pupils themselves if they were trained to read their own or each other's work with critical care. The teacher, however, does for his pupils what they should do for themselves, and thus violates one of the most important canons of teaching. The pupils should correct their own errors. If, upon trial, they should be found unable to correct one or more of them, the work of the teacher is not to correct the particular blunders, but to explain their nature, and show by exemplification of them in other contexts, how to correct them. Punctuation needs much more attention than it has been receiving, and better judgment should be exercised in the choice of subjects for composition. As a rule, abstract subjects and those that have to be got up from books should be avoided. At present there are too many of these in the bulk of the programmes of work presented to us. We recommend narratives of personal experience and description of scenes and of objects that can be seen and handled. The description of objects can also be made a fine exercise in observation—a function of mind that is too much neglected. In a good many schools the composition exercises of the senior classes are done on slates, the teachers allowing four or five minutes for the correction of twenty or thirty of them. A moment's consideration should show the absurdity of such pretence at teaching composition.

The results of the examination in grammar are very disappointing. Here and there we come upon classes that have been well drilled in the mechanism of the sentence, but the bulk of the children we examine show dense ignorance of the grammar of the sentences they have been reading during the year The examination is always conducted *vivâ voce*, and the examples are selected from the class reading-book. No unseen sentence is ever placed before the children, and yet even in Standard VI. the amount of blundering in the parts of speech and in the function of phrases and clauses is most disheartening. Nothing is to our minds more certain than that the majority of our children are now leaving school without either a technical or a working knowledge of the me-

chanism of the sentences they speak, write, and read. By working knowledge we mean not knowledge the be-all and end-all of which is to assign words to their parts of speech or to their proper pigeon-holes in a scheme of analysis, but knowledge such as enables a child to recognise a well-built sentence when he sees it, to tell how the arrangement of the parts contributes to the unity of the whole, and how the sentence affects, or is affected by, the sentences preceding and following it. We protest against the doctrine that grammar is of little or no importance and that English and composition can be taught without it. It is contrary to all reason and experience In reply the classical scholar may say, 'Look at me, I write a good deal, I never studied English grammar; you know my writing, what have you to say against it?" We have nothing to say against it, but we should like you to tell us what time you have given to the study of Latin grammar, and the mechanism of the Latin sentence and to style as exemplified by Latin authors. It is no marvel that after so long a training under a competent Latin teacher you are able to write well. No one can practise translation from one language into another without learning the grammar and idiom of both. You have learned English grammar through Latin. Our children cannot learn it in this way learn it, however, they must if they are to leave school with ability to discriminate between what is good and what is faulty in expression, and to recognise instantly the factors to which the good or the faulty is due. This result ought to be achieved in our highest standard, but it is, in our judgment, great folly to attempt to achieve it without teaching the grammar of the language. The grammar exercise we have in view unquestionably affords a fine training in observation, in inductive reasoning, and in literary taste, and is, we think, deserving of much greater encouragement than it has recently received. A sound knowledge of the mechanism of his own language ought to be one of the chief ends of a child's education.

Geography is, in the main, got up by the children from text-books, and, in a good many schools, without sufficient reference to the map. We frequently find children able to name the principal features of a country (towns, mountains, rivers, &c.) without being able to place them in their relative positions the information got up from the text-book has not been localised Children should, we think, be well practised in drawing and filling in rough sketch maps and in reproducing them from memory Very few teachers, we regret to say, teach geography from maps drawn on the blackboard by themselves. Owing to the mass of details they contain ordinary wall maps are not easy reading even for adults, and to children they are perfectly bewildering. It is surprising to us that most teachers do not feel the difficulty of teaching from them. To render their teaching as concrete as possible some teachers make use of pictures taken from the illustrated journals. The practice is a good one, and we commend it to those who have not adopted it. The answering in physical geography is generally of poor quality

The treatment of object-lessons and elementary science is, in a large number of schools, not in accordance with the methods of science. There is little exercise of eye and less of hand, there is little learning about things from a study of the things themselves, things are viewed not from the standpoint of an observer but from the standpoint of another's knowledge object-lesson books take the place of objects, and the children are the passive recipients of the information extracted by their teachers from the books. It is true a good deal of useful information is imparted to the children during the course of every year, but we cannot affirm too emphatically that the value of science teaching lies not in information, but in the habits of mind that are induced by the discipline of patient and accurate observation. In the domain of physics many teachers find it difficult to devise simple experiments to illustrate their teaching. We have lately come across a useful little book written expressly for teachers, and containing a large number of such experiments "Science Works Simplified," by C. R. Long, M.A., Training Master, Victorian Education Department. We commend the book to the notice of teachers.

In but few schools are we satisfied with either the quality or the quantity of work done by the class above Standard VI. If the pupils of this class worked as earnestly and were taught as carefully as those of, say, Standard VI., they could do well at least three times as much as most of them now do. There is, we think, but one remedy for this defect prescribe a syllabus of work and, in the large schools, hold the headmaster responsible for the class.

In the larger schools the preparatory classes are generally well taught, but in many of the schools taught by one teacher they get very little attention, and advance slowly The number of pupils over eight years of age presented for examination in preparatory classes is 1,270. The reasons assigned for so presenting them appeared to us to be, in most cases, quite satisfactory

Order and attention are generally good, and the children are well mannered in a fair proportion of the schools. We sometimes see exhibitions of rudeness out of, but never in, school. Much more attention should, we think, be given to physical training. At present the girls of the standard classes get next to none.

The Inspectors' Conference held at Wellington in February, though it did not, as some people seem to think it ought to have done, recast the syllabus and abolish examinations, was productive of great good. Most of the Inspectors were before personally unknown to one another, they were ignorant of one another's methods of inspection and examination, and the representatives of each district naturally acted on their own interpretation of the syllabus and regulations. Our meeting at Wellington changed all that, and we dispersed from the Conference feeling that our exchange of thoughts and comparison of methods had been most profitable to us and to the cause of education. Apart from this the most important result of the Conference is the transfer from Inspectors to headmasters of the pass examination of Standard I. and Standard II. So far as the large schools are concerned, this change has relieved us of much unnecessary drudgery and given us more time for the oral work of the middle and upper classes. In the small schools the relief is not so great, for we are instructed to test Standard I. and Standard II. in the pass work, and, the classes in these schools being small, the sample test cannot, in justice to their teachers, be applied to them. We have, therefore, to examine all the pupils in the most important pass subjects. Still, the change is of

advantage to us even here, and we should be glad to see it extended to Standard III. Many people seem to regard this change as freedom of classification for these classes. Freedom of classification means much more than this, and has long been allowed by the regulations of the department. It has not, it is true, been adopted by the teachers, for the reason, we suppose, that it is felt to be impracticable. Freedom of classification means, among other things, that a child may be taught reading in one class, arithmetic in another, grammar in another, and so on. It is an excellent system, for under it no child is kept back in one subject because he is weak in another, but every teacher knows that, even in large strongly-staffed schools, it is very difficult to carry out. Nevertheless, teachers originated and have kept up the cry for this system of classification. Obviously they do not know what they want, or they do not understand the regulations under which they work, for freedom of classification, whether in the sense in which it is understood by well-informed educationists or in the sense that a teacher may promote a child either without examination or after failure at the Inspector's examination, has been for years, and still is, accorded by regulation to every teacher in the land. Here are the terms of the regulation "For purposes of inspection and examination every pupil in the school must be considered to belong to one of the standard classes as here defined, but for the purposes of instruction the principal teacher of a school shall have full discretion to arrange his pupils in different classes for different subjects, according to their ability and proficiency with respect to the several subjects, and according to the number of available teachers, and also to cause the children of two or more standard classes to be gathered into one class for instruction in any subject and, if any pupil, by reason of special ability or proficiency in any subject, receives in such subject the instruction proper to a higher standard class than that to which he is considered to belong, he may in such subject be examined with the higher class in which he has been placed for instruction, and if, being so examined, he satisfies the examiner, his success shall be reckoned towards his 'pass in his proper standard class. Also, at the discretion of a principal teacher, a pupil may be promoted to a higher standard class though he has failed at the examination in the work of the standard for which he was last presented." The cry, therefore, is for what is in actual possession.

Other results of the Conference are a few changes in the syllabus, a direction to Inspectors as to what shall, in certain specified subjects, constitute a "pass," and the issue by the department of the annual test questions in arithmetic. In a general way, therefore, we may say that the examinations are now approximately uniform throughout the colony We trust that the uniformity craze may not be carried too far To both teachers and Inspectors a wise discretion should be allowed.

We have, &c.,

W Taylor,
P Goyen } Inspectors.
W S. Fitzgerald,

The Secretary, Education Board, Otago.

SOUTHLAND

Sir,— Education Office, Invercargill, 17th February, 1895.

We have the honour to lay before the Board our report for the year ending 31st December, 1894, on the state of primary education in this district.

The number of pupils withheld from examination in Standard I. is smaller than it was last year For the non-presentation of those still withheld, the excuses offered were parents' request, brief or irregular attendance, mental or physical unfitness, long distances or bad roads. In nearly every case the excuse was reasonable and well founded.

The examination determining the fitness of pupils for promotion to Standards I. and II. respectively is now conducted by the teachers, and, we rejoice to say, the majority of the promotions was entirely judicious. On the other hand, whether through yielding to external pressure or through simply failing to recognise their responsibility in the matter a number of teachers gave promotions fraught, we fear, with subsequent vexation to individuals and confusion to classes.

A report dealing with educational matters ought, it may be presumed, to depict the actual condition of affairs and have more or less dimly in the background an outline of what might be or what ought to be. Keeping this in mind we proceed to pass in review the three main factors that have to be reckoned with in the work of education—namely, the educators, education, and the educated.

The Educators.—The professional status of our teachers is shown by the following table, the letters denoting the various stages of literary attainments and the figures the various degrees of practical skill:—

Class.	Division.					Total in each Class.
	1	2	3	4	5	
A			1			1
B	..	4	2	1		7
C	1	2	2	2		7
D ..	12	11	15	14	1	53
E	9	20	23	26	4	82
Total in each division	22	37	43	43	5	150

The Department of Education, adopting a method necessarily artificial, determines what may be supposed to represent the absolute status of teachers by striking a balance between the various classes and divisions, thus dividing the teachers of the colony into nine grand ranks. From this point of view our certificated teachers must be classified as follows None in rank 1, none in rank 2, six in rank 3, sixteen in rank 4, twenty-three in rank 5, thirty-seven in rank 6, thirty-seven in rank 7, twenty-seven in rank 8, four in rank 9.

Taking everything into consideration, we believe that the efficiency of our teaching power will compare well with that of most other districts. Remote from university and training-school centres, our teachers, so far as literary attainments are concerned, labour under great and permanent disadvantage, and, as the appointments in our new schools are usually filled by young teachers whose chance of acquiring skill and experience has been but small, the higher divisions are necessarily somewhat thinly represented. There can be no doubt, however, that in respect of the professional status of our teachers every year brings substantial individual and general improvement.

As there are altogether 167 teachers holding responsible positions under the Board, it remains to account for the seventeen that are uncertificated. Of these, eight are licensed, while nine have no professional standing whatever One can only marvel at the want of pluck—we had almost said of self-respect—that deters most of these teachers from encountering, at least, the E examination. The Board would be acting with perfect justice were it to say to a number of them, "You have had time and opportunity to establish yourselves in your profession you must now, either by accepting a lower position or by quitting the service, make room for superior teachers kept by you in inferior positions.

Apart from his ability to teach, the ideal teacher is a man of many and diverse gifts. He is resourceful and endowed with an ample measure of tact, able to control and able to organize, an example for imitation and an influence for good in his district, in a word, his parts must be summed up in an individuality that cannot fail so to mould the character of his pupils that they will pass from his hands clad in moral armour and furnished with intellectual weapons worthy of the dignity of citizenship so soon to be conferred upon them. Every day in each school the ideal is more or less unfolded, here almost realised, there almost destroyed. We refer for a moment to organization and to example.

The power of a school depends very largely on its organization, the aim of which should be to secure the maximum result with the minimum effort. In many of our schools the organization is perhaps as nearly perfect as circumstances will admit, but in others, and these sometimes not the least important, the teachers go through the day's programme in a happy-go-lucky fashion, without once pausing to reflect that the same power will produce very different effects according to the degree of skill and foresight with which it is applied. Hence it happens, in these latter schools, that pupils are not taught to win half the battle by being taught from the beginning to help themselves that the freedom of classification encouraged by the Education Department is not taken advantage of that successful grouping of classes is not accomplished that pupil-teachers are kept teaching the same classes year after year and that the pupils of the class above Standard VI. pass their time as aimlessly as if they were already swelling the ranks of the unemployed. It would be well, indeed, if the Board were to demand that pupil-teachers should have, during the course of their training, experience in teaching some at least of the subjects of each class in the school, and also that in schools in which there is a class above Standard VI. a definite programme of work should be submitted for examination.

As showing the infectiousness of example, we may state that in the Waimea Plains there are three schools the interiors and gardens of which, in respect of taste and good order greatly excel those of all the other schools in the district. One teacher first set the example the others followed, and who can estimate the effect of the unspoken lessons in taste, order, and economy that the children attending these schools unconsciously learn? In another school, in a different part of the district, the teacher has a taste for natural history his pupils take their walks and rambles with observant eyes, and frequently bring him some object of curiosity or of admiration from nature's inexhaustible store. In yet another school the teacher has more than ordinary skill with his pen and pencil he enables his pupils to dispense to a great extent with text-books by mimeographing so much of the essentials of a subject as he wishes them to remember In this he is followed by other teachers, to the great gain of the pupils, who, with such excellent models, cannot fail in successful imitation. The new method of reporting on the examination of schools leaves the teacher to some extent free to follow individual bent, which it is devoutly to be hoped will early displace the hungering and thirsting after standard passes that have hitherto characterized a too large proportion of our primary-school teachers.

Education.—This subject naturally resolves itself into two parts—namely, subjects of instruction and methods of instruction. The subjects of instruction dealt with in our primary schools are divided into three classes, "standard," "class, and "additional, these again being subdivided into the various branches deemed proper to an elementary training. Following the wake of civilisation, those in charge of educational matters are prone through excessive definition to specialise certain subjects by detaching them from their general bearing, almost to the extent of pernicious isolation. Herein lurks an evil which if not guarded against will gnaw at the root of true educational progress. The grand truth that knowledge is one and indivisible may be obscured, and unwary teachers led to regard every subject as independent of, if not antagonistic to, every other and to the remaining portion of the educational whole. We would not be understood to imply that education should lag in the march of civilisation. On the contrary, it must be sensible to all the influences making for individual, social, and national welfare, but it must foster them only by letting some of the old material go, and by bringing into stronger relief the immutable principles on which all true development rests. Careful definition is indeed a practical necessity but it does not follow that because the branches of knowledge are carefully defined pupils are educated by

acquiring so much of this and so much of that. True education may be compared to a varied landscape over which the pupils are to be taken to face every now and again new features from a new point of view. It is just in enabling his pupils to gain the right point of view in attacking difficulties and new subjects that much of the teacher's art consists. Not till he has attained the right point of view can a pupil pierce the husk and reach the kernel of a subject. The following idea contains, we believe, the germs of a method of counteracting the narrowing tendencies of specialisation. For a few minutes after assembly each morning the teacher might quietly talk over with the children some interesting item of news . point out the beauties of a simple verse from his favourite poet; unveil the hidden meaning of a moral maxim , recount some stirring event or describe some famous scene far off or near , state and explain a fact from among the many wonders of science , bring under their notice the great event or great man of which or of whom the day is the anniversary Such a plan would occupy but a few minutes of the school day , it would lead the pupils to feel that, though geography and grammar as such may be distasteful, knowledge is fascinating; and it might further be made the means of convincing them that, though school discipline may be irksome, it is full of purpose.

In dealing with the methods of instruction appertaining to specific subjects we shall begin with the infant departments. Here is to be found one of the most hopeful signs of educational activity in the district. Slowly but surely rational methods are ousting the routine of other years, and the seeds of a movement destined sooner or later to revolutionise the teacher's art are silently taking root at the first and critical period of the school life of our pupils. The central idea of the kindergarten work now carried on in our best schools is that doing should go hand in hand with learning. The eye is trained to discriminate number colour form, and size the ear, tone and pitch , and the hand, weight and texture while all these powers of discrimination are turned to practical account in the performing of a multitude of constructive exercises. If in its infancy and in its but very partial adoption it is so abundantly fruitful, the system, when matured and universal, will produce in the training of children results of which one can now form but a very faint conception.

To turn to the standard classes. As a means of general culture the reading-lesson often falls sadly short of the ideal. In so far as it consists in converting printed signs into sounds it is indeed moderately successful, though even in this respect there is room for immense improvement in some schools. But the reading-lesson has a larger purpose , it should enlist the pupils' sympathy in the thought and in the spirit of the language, brim over with interesting references, and tend to beget in the pupils both the desire and the ability to acquire information from sources other than such as are to be found within the four walls of a schoolroom. There is grave reason to fear that writing is frequently taught in a more or less slipshod and incidental manner. When the percentage craze dominated schoolwork teachers were no doubt tempted to make writing not an end in itself, but merely a means of acquisition of knowledge in other directions. There is now no need for intemperate haste writing should be taught as an end as well as a means. The principles should be carefully explained in set lessons composition, exercise, slate-work, and exercise-books will afford the necessary practice. In future we shall feel ourselves obliged to censure alike unmethodic teaching, as well as careless work on the part of the pupils, whether in copy-books, exercise-books, or on slates. Some of the schools did excellent work in drawing. In teaching this subject many teachers habitually miss the opportunity of giving it a practical turn , pupils have consequently a dislike for it simply because they fail to see in it any practical purpose. Now that teachers have had time to familiarise themselves with the demands of the department in this subject we shall expect substantial compliance with the requirements on the part of all the pupils. Spelling continues to be, on the whole, well taught, though during the course of our inspection of the schools we met with some astonishing instances of careless method, or, rather, of the total absence of method. No endeavour was made either to thoroughly correct errors or to impress the correct forms of words in the pupils' minds. Such teaching is, of course, worse than useless. Arithmetic is well taught in the majority of the schools. In this subject the teacher's tendency to specialise is seen in its worst form in the elevating of each rule to a position independent of, if not in actual conflict with, every other This dignifying of rules destroys any love for, or command over, the subject a pupil might have, for when brought face to fact with a problem he must needs first settle the rule by which it is to be worked, often a more serious difficulty that the solution of the problem. If teachers would only impress on children the fact that arithmetic is merely common-sense expressed in figures the subject would appear far less formidable. The children should also be encouraged to bring to school for explanation by the teacher clippings from the newspapers containing share lists and the state of the local, colonial, and Home markets. Geography is poorly taught by a great many teachers. The usual method of teaching it appears to be to place a text-book in the pupil's hand, with the request that he should commit its contents to memory, and to supplement this by a series of questions more or less perfunctory This amounts to little more than the dreary conning of the arid wastes of place-names on the part of the pupil. In this subject the teacher must be very careful about the point of view he selects, for in no other is the interdependence of facts and principles more close in no other is there more frequent need for an appeal to the general body of the pupil's knowledge. Nor must the practical bearings of the subject be lost sight of for a moment. Pupils should be encouraged to bring to school extracts from the newspapers in which are involved questions of local, colonial, and foreign geography, as well as extracts regarding shipping news and mail routes. In many of our schools the teaching of composition leaves little to be desired. In some, however, pupils have presented sentences showing an almost total disregard of capital letters and full stops—matters in themselves perhaps trivial, but indicative of gross slovenliness notwithstanding. In this subject set lessons should be given , incidents from history, studies in geography, and biography from general sources will afford abundant practice. Grammatical errors made in composition exercises should be dealt with during the grammar lesson, as pupils require all the time usually given to composition to acquire freedom of expression.

Coming to the class-subjects, we remark first that grammar is taught in a fairly satisfactory manner in most of the schools. In teaching this subject teachers do not always bear in mind its double purpose. It should train the pupil to reason clearly, and it should also furnish him with an instrument of criticism. The latter or practical side of grammar should be taken advantage of to correct wrong forms of expression, whether they have occurred in conversation or in composition exercises. This, however, only when the pupils have acquired a working knowledge of the subject till then the correct form should be given by the teacher without comment, as there is sometimes a very strong tendency to teach what is right by giving examples of what is wrong. In our mental-arithmetic tests we endeavoured as far as possible to keep in mind the practical needs of the pupils, and also the extent to which the principles of the subject had been taught. In the first two standards the results were usually very favourable, but, whether from inferior teaching or from the total neglect of teaching, the results in the upper classes were often very disappointing. When he is teaching this subject the teacher should always bear in mind the work of the next lower and next higher class. There is every reason, for instance, why pupils in Standard IV should be able to answer plain mental questions in interest. History is well taught in many of our schools, but some of the programmes of the year's work submitted in others were totally incoherent and destitute of definite aim. In elementary science progress is slow, but not so slow as to lead one to despair of substantial improvement in time. In country districts we should like to see the boys take agriculture and the girls domestic economy, but this of course is a matter for teachers to arrange.

The additional subjects are well taught throughout the district. There are very few schools indeed in which the children are not trained to sing. In the larger centres more perhaps might be done in the way of military drill. The pupils of the Invercargill schools, for instance, might take up company drill and meet at some convenient place for an occasional field day There would ensue between the schools a healthy rivalry both as to smartness of appearance and precision of movements.

The Educated.—Throughout the length and breadth of the district the children are pictures of health and models of tidiness. They are with few exceptions very well behaved, and they appear to be on the best of terms with their teachers. Some people, judging the product of our schools by the standard of their own solid experience, presage disorder for society and disaster for the State while others, with more reason, prophesy that the land will be full of well-taught boys and girls for whom there are but small material prospects. We confess having seen nothing to convince us that the former state of affairs will eventuate, while, as to the latter, we believe that the training in manual dexterity which is taking root in our schools, and which we hope to see extended more or less to all the classes, will enable pupils to rely for their livelihood as much on their hands as on their brains. Such a prospect would alone justify a national system of education, for, as Huxley says, "A potential Watt, Faraday, or Davy is dirt cheap if he could be secured to the nation at a hundred thousand pounds."

It is fit that we should acknowledge the interest taken by several of the Committees in supplying their schools with kindergarten and scientific apparatus, and also the trouble freely bestowed by several teachers and pupil-teachers in learning how to use the apparatus to advantage.

We are, &c.

JAMES HENDRY,
GEO. D BRAIK, } Inspectors.

The Secretary, Education Board, Invercargill.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ..	143			
Standard VI. .	412	405	348	13 11
" V	729	694	525	13 3
" IV	1,169	1,131	713	12 4
" III.	1,456	1,401	1,016	11 2
" II.	1,209	1,165	1,112	10 1
" I.	1,277	1,248	1,210	8 11
Preparatory	2,933			
Totals	9,328	6,044	4,924	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

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