

was very common, and Standard V. pupils considered it sufficient to state that Calcutta is in Asia, and so on. The answering in physical geography still remained unsatisfactory, and the answers often indicated inferior methods of instruction and the consequent confusion of ideas.

During the year I frequently required teachers to give lessons on subjects of interest in New Zealand, and even where they had carefully prepared the lessons they were at a great disadvantage, and often conveyed quite erroneous ideas, as they had not visited the places or scenes referred to. As a just conception of our own country is of the greatest importance to those engaged in teaching, could not the department assist teachers who wish to visit the different parts of the colony during their holidays? The Union Company makes a concession, but insufficient to induce travelling by sea. In many parts of the North Island coach-fares have been cut down by competition, and if the Railway Department could be prevailed upon to issue tickets at, say, half or quarter rates to teachers travelling over new country many would, I believe, avail themselves of the privilege. The plan suggested is merely an extension of the principle underlying the cheap school excursions, of which the advantages are generally recognised. The educational results are obvious; more accurate knowledge would be imparted to the children, lessons could be made more pictorial and descriptive, and that horror "cram" would be pushed further into the background.

*Class and Additional Subjects.*—My remarks in the last report still apply, except that in history in Standard III. there was an improvement.

A review of the work of the year shows that education in the district has progressed steadily, if slowly. A great obstacle is the frequent changing of teachers. A new teacher comes to a school, and if the examination results are unsatisfactory the past and present teachers repudiate any responsibility, and the apportioning thereof is often very difficult. Better results are hoped for in the future, but in a year or so the new teacher seeks and may obtain removal, and disappointing work is again found.

The order and discipline were generally very satisfactory. In only a few schools were the pupils not self-reliant and honest in their work.

I have, &c.,

W. E. SPENCER, M.A., B.Sc.,

Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.

#### WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Education Board Office, Wanganui, 28th February, 1897.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending the 31st December, 1896.

*Number of Schools.*—At the close of the school-year 123 schools were in active operation, as against 116 at the close of 1895.

*Enrolment.*—For the last quarter of the year the average weekly roll-numbers were: Males, 5,190; females, 4,887; total, 10,077. For the four quarters of the year the mean average weekly roll-number was 10,121.5. This shows an increase for the year of 374, which appears low, considering that six new schools were established, and that many buildings were enlarged. All the new schools, however, were opened during the last quarter of the year, and the total number enrolled at them is only 117. The increase, therefore, on the rolls of the remaining 117 schools of the district is 257. Taking the larger schools, and comparing the average weekly roll-numbers of the last quarters of the past two years, we find that the four schools in Wanganui Borough show an increase of thirty-nine, Feilding School an increase of thirty-three, and Hawera School an increase of forty-eight; while the three schools in Palmerston Borough show a decrease of sixty, Marton School a decrease of twenty-three, and Foxton School a decrease of eleven. This clearly shows that the district is indebted not so much to the large towns for any increase in the number of pupils enrolled as to the progress of settlement. It must, however, be remembered that many of the children enrolled in the new schools in the back-country previously attended some other schools in the district. How settlement has advanced on this west coast during the past ten years is shown in a remarkable manner by the following figures: From 1886 to 1896 the average weekly roll-number of all the schools has risen from 6,221 to 10,077, or an increase of 62 per cent.; and the number of schools open from 75 to 123, or an increase of 64 per cent. This is the first year the average weekly roll-number has reached 10,000.

*Average Attendance.*—For the last quarter of the year the strict average daily attendances were: Males, 4,083; females, 3,859; total, 7,942. The working average for the same period was 8,051, or 109 higher than the strict average. In calculating the working average the number of half-days on which the attendance is under half the number on the roll, and the attendances on such half-days, are thrown out of the calculation. For the four quarters of the year the strict average daily attendance was 8,050.5, and the working average 8,145.5, or 95 higher than the strict average. For the year the increase in the strict average is 657.3, although the increase in the roll-number is only 374; and the strict average attendance expressed as a percentage of the weekly roll-number is 79.5. These calculations point to increased regularity of attendance, and we are pleased to note that the percentage is 2.5 above the highest yet reached in the district—viz., 77 per cent. in 1894. Still, this 79.5 is below the percentages of nine of the thirteen districts in 1895, in which year Otago was at the top with 85.9. But, other things being equal, the district with the best attendance should show the best teaching results; and, if this be granted, how can Wanganui compare favourably with Otago when in the former district one pupil in five is absent daily, as against one pupil in seven in the latter? There would be little to complain of if pupils attended as well throughout the year as they do on examination-days. On those days 95 per cent. of the pupils presented in standards, and 91 per cent. of all the pupils on the rolls (including those in the preparatory classes), attended.