

is likely to be the outcome of the teaching. One cannot be certain as to the actual products which are likely to be sent from a school as in the case of a manufactory of ordinary products, but no school is so organized that it is not possible to estimate the likely effects of tone, discipline, honour, and manliness such as they are embodied in the master or principal teacher and reflected in the work of his school. Every subject of instruction taught in the schools has its full effect upon character and mind, and I am satisfied that the schools, if they are to become more than mere grinders of knowledge, must have high moral ideals in the preparation of every subject that must be taught under the departmental regulations. Take, for example, that peculiar habit of inattention and indifference which one sees so much in evidence among New-Zealand-born children. Inattention is the outcome of bad disciplinary training and teaching, and I fear that this is the great defect in most of our schools. Without intending to do so, teachers fall into many curious habits in the performance of their duties, and one of them is the bad habit of repeating again and again an order or a command. In a dictation exercise, even a phrase of not more than half a dozen words is sometimes repeated four, five, and even six times in a way which betrays at once the character of the teacher. To an observer the effects of such training upon a class of children cannot be doubted. Few will be found to gainsay the statement that the training of the children at school has much to do with the habits of thought and attention to duty such as one finds among people in their ordinary daily transactions; and a lesson in dictation or other subject carried on in the way described can only end in destroying character and defeating the very purpose for which schools are established. I fully recognise that many of the defects one finds in the schools may be set down to the "standard system," which is general in its operation, but the defects in this direction are certainly not so great as many teachers imagine, and are such as must always exist in some degree under any Government scheme. Under present regulations a wide freedom is allowed to the principal teachers in the control of the work of their schools, and one must look to them to strengthen and inculcate those methods of instruction which, whilst they insure mental growth, also train children to a right sense of attention to duty both in school and in the workshop.

*Condition of Buildings, &c.*—In most of the districts the school buildings, grounds, and fences are in good repair, and the school provision which has been made in some of the larger centres has facilitated the work of the teachers, especially in the junior departments of schools like Gisborne, Port Ahuriri, Hastings, and Dannevirke, where overcrowding had existed for some time. I have little to say with respect to the apparatus and appliances in the schools further than to remark that it would be a great convenience both to myself and the teachers were an official list issued giving the maps, diagrams, and other things which the Board furnish to the various schools. At the present time a wide difference prevails among them. Some of the schools possess diagrams in natural history, physiology, and physical science, whilst others have none whatever beyond eight or nine sheets of Oliver and Boyd's object-lesson cards. Good diagrams are always of high value to teachers, and, although science can be taught and object-lessons given on subjects of local and general interest without the aid of diagrams or other apparatus, it is still necessary to be supplied with such if children are to become acquainted with the world outside their own immediate environment.

The general result of my inspection visits to the schools was encouraging. As a rule the rooms were clean and tidy, and the teachers were working with diligence and energy, but not always with method. It is to me pleasing to watch the work of the younger men and women who are appointed to the charge of a school for the first time. There is a strong tendency among them to work too hard themselves, and I have found it necessary to spend a good deal of time in showing them how to simplify their work by the amalgamation of classes for certain subjects, as wisely recommended in the standard regulations.

*School Attendance.*—I do not think that the Act providing for the employment of truant officers by Committees is likely to improve matters in this direction. Members of Committees are so bound up with their several districts that they do not like the unpleasant task of enforcing the attendance of children at school, and many good men refrain from offering themselves as candidates for election on account of their dislike to enter on the work of compulsion. A public officer is able to undertake a duty of this sort without incurring odium or ill-feeling in a district, and, if the School Attendance Act is to be of any real use, I fear the policeman will have to carry it out as a part of his ordinary duties. But I have much more faith myself in the growing efficiency of the schools for the improvement of attendance than in any expedient which the law may devise. Let children once appreciate the pleasure of school-life and irregularity will disappear, except in the case of the few parents who will always be found to care more for themselves than the future of their offspring.

*Examinations.*—Examination for passes is carried on throughout the year in the same way as inspection. In the northern portion of the district the smaller schools are examined in the first half of the school-year, whilst all the schools in the southern or bush district are examined at this time. The pupil-teachers' examination in July forms the break between the two periods, whilst the December month is taken up with the examination for scholarships and the work of the Gisborne District High School.

The large number of children over eight years of age in the preparatory classes does not show any tendency to decrease, but rather the reverse. In 1894 there were 550 children returned as belonging to the preparatory classes who were over eight years old. In 1895 the number was 520; whilst this year the number reached 683—namely, 375 males and 308 females. It is difficult to account for the large proportion of children of an advanced age in the lower classes of some schools when neighbouring schools have very few of such children. In Napier 120 of the children were returned as belonging to the preparatory classes though they were over eight years of age. This is equal to more than 10 per cent. of the whole number at the school. Gisborne and Hastings have less than 8 per cent. of such children in the preparatory classes, and Port Ahuriri has 6·5 per cent. only. In Dannevirke the percentage reaches 13, and in Woodville it exceeds 17. For the whole