

small than to the large schools. I have no wish to make comparisons between the various schools, but the high proportion of upper-standard children at Manga-atua, Maharahara West, Kumeroa, Makotuku, Kaikora, and Tiniroto presents food for thought and suggests the possibility of raising the condition of the schools to a much higher average standard of efficiency than most of them have at present reached.

In the examinations which an Inspector has to carry on so frequently it can readily be understood that many aspects of school-teaching and government are presented to him which appear weak and mendable. Many such have been pointed out by me in previous reports, but it is well sometimes to give a review of one's work, and to put down reflections which may have forced themselves into notice during the progress of examinations. Eighteen years have gone by since the schools began their work under the present scheme of education, and although great changes have taken place in the character and number of the school-buildings, the government and control of the schools, and the influences operating on the work of education, as a whole one can hardly feel satisfied with the sum total of effects produced. I do not pretend to be able to point out the actual cause. No doubt there are many causes tending to diminish the effective work in education, but I cannot help thinking that much must be set down to the tendency among us to imitate others rather than to foster that form of knowledge which is adapted and needful to our special environment. For eighteen years I have hammered at this thought in the hope that something might be done so as to make our education more adaptive to the future needs of the children, rather than continuing the attempt to learn things for which the memory alone is wanted, whilst the mind may be a blank in action and duty. The schools are called upon to learn, in addition to the three Rs, geography, drawing, grammar, composition, history, and a number of other subjects, yet no effort is made to foster that form of training without which our country must fail in competition with other countries in the matter of production and commerce. Arithmetic and science are both taught in the schools, but of a sort from which the worst, rather than the best, results may be expected. In the higher classes the question of the early adoption of the metric system is of importance to the country. Under the Standard regulations the Sixth Standard pupils are supposed to know something of this system, and I remember well that the Inspectors, when in conference three years ago, made a strong recommendation in its favour. Since then, however, I do not think that a single test in arithmetic has been set bearing on the metric system, although, if we as a community desire to expand our trade and widen our commercial intercourse with nations other than England and our immediate neighbours in Australia, the metric system must be the channel through which the change must come. Europe and America have a metric system, and the Eastern countries are following them; and our children should be fully acquainted with the system in anticipation of the inevitable change. There is much talk just now of England's trade troubles as against Germany; but, as pointed out by many British Consuls in their reports, Germany studies the wants of her customers, and a common basis of calculation facilitates her trade with foreigners. People naturally deal with those who have the same basis for calculations, and our plan of following the Mother-country with respect to our calculations in arithmetic are certainly behind the scientific demands of to-day.

As to science instruction for the children in the schools, I am convinced that when the question is fully understood there will be no hesitation as to the course to be followed. Science is training in observation and in the application of observed facts to the necessities of life. All true science has for its great aim the art of living well, and all subjects of instruction should aim to bring this about. Very little is being done in the schools having this end in view. Science is attempted in most if not all of them, but effort is thrown away in too many cases. The senior girls in the Gisborne school are trained by the head-mistress in the special art of nursing and ambulance-work, the infants' department providing an abundance of useful patients; and excellent work is being done in this way. Sewing occupies a prominent place in the work of the schools, so far as the girls are concerned; and I am glad to find the Napier Committee alive to the value of "cutting-out" and machine-work for the senior girls. But all this is small, considering the possible benefits to be derived from a well-directed scheme of instruction in science. What is wanted just now, in the country schools especially, is the utilisation of the cheese- and butter-factories for the benefit of the children in technical training. Such factories are to be found in many townships, and one hears of the coming of the Dairy Inspector and of the special lecturer, but it is curious that, in a matter of so much importance to the country, the services of such officers are not used for the training of boys and girls in the art of butter-making and cheese-making, so as to anticipate the years that are to come. The Danes have introduced instruction-schools of this type, and surely, even with a moderate organization, the same plan could be adopted here. All we require is reorganization and a simplification of our present plans, for no increase of expenditure is wanted to bring about what will soon become indispensable, if the children are to grow up capable of competing in productive intelligence with those of other countries.

The Act which was passed in 1895 for the "promotion of elementary technical instruction" has led to the opening of special classes in Gisborne and Napier. When last in Gisborne, and at the special request of the authorities, I visited the classes on two evenings during my stay in the town. In one room a ladies' committee had control of a large class of young women, who were occupied in scientific dressmaking. In several other rooms mixed classes were being carried on in mechanical drawing or some other subject of a technical character. The classes in Napier were equally successful, and about seventy youths and young men went through a course of scientific study under competent instructors. No efforts appear to have been made in Napier to establish evening technical classes for young women. I do not know whether the technical training introduced by the Napier Committee will entitle the school to a special grant under section 4 of the Act, but should this be the case no doubt other schools will soon follow the example set, as there are teachers available who are well qualified to carry out the work.