

requirements such as the large increase in the school attendance has made necessary. In 1878 there were no school buildings in Napier belonging to the Board, although three schools were being carried on, with an attendance of 516 pupils. There are now five schools in the town which are owned by the Board, with an attendance of 1,630 pupils. In 1878 Hastings had a roll of 43 children, Woodville of 58, Dannevirke of 40, and Gisborne of 196; whilst last year Hastings had 578 pupils attending school; Woodville, 397; Dannevirke, 416; and Gisborne, 613. The schools were staffed by 54 teachers in 1878, two of whom held certificates of competency as trained men. There are now 201 teachers in the service of the Board, 128 holding certificates of competency from the Department of Education in Wellington, the others being pupil-teachers who are undergoing a course of training under special regulations. From this brief retrospect and comparison between the past and the present it will be noticed that great changes have taken place in the whole aspect and condition of education throughout the district. Year by year the progress has been going on, although during the past three years the increase in the school population is not so large as in previous years.

Five new schools have been opened by the Board during the past year, with an aggregate roll of 89 pupils. Three of the schools are situated in districts far removed from the main lines of communication, and, though the average attendance at those schools was 32 for December quarter, it will take me, at the lowest estimate, seven days to visit and examine them, even though calling but once a year. Portland Island I have not been able to reach, though the school has been in operation for eighteen months or more, and there are several other schools like Motu and Mangatu where it is sheer waste of time to visit considering the days it takes to get there and the mere handful of pupils who attend them. With the permission of the Board it would be possible to arrange for the examination of the work at these small subsidised schools by means of paper tests, leaving it open for me to inspect such schools in my own way and in my own time as circumstances may permit.

All the schools excepting Portland Island have been duly visited and examined. My inspection reports have given in detail the condition and needs of the several schools, but it may be well to point out here that the time is coming when a fairly large expenditure will be necessary for maintenance in the case of some of the larger buildings. Napier (main school), Port Ahuriri, Gisborne, Hastings, and others will need important improvements, such as painting, fencing, and drainage. Increased attention is also desirable in the matter of office accommodation for both teachers and children. The care that is usually bestowed upon the grounds and building by School Committees has not been maintained in a number of instances, although to the credit of the teachers and Committees concerned it must be pointed out that the buildings, grounds, and arrangements generally at Woodville, Mangaatua, Kumeroa, Dannevirke, Makotuku, Makaretu North, Hampden, Waipawa, Petane, Tiniroto, Napier (side), Gisborne, and Patutahi are everything to be desired.

In several districts the office arrangements are very unsatisfactory, and due provision is not made even for a water-supply. Motu, Mangatu, Waimate, Wainui, Wanstead, Puketitiri, Mohaka, and Makaretu South all need attention in one or both of the wants mentioned, as great inconvenience exists in every school where these necessary requirements are not provided when the schools are first opened.

During the year I discontinued making recommendations as to the wants of schools in the matter of apparatus and appliances. Attention was drawn by me last year to the need of an official list of apparatus and appliances, stating the maps, diagrams, and appliances which the Board furnish to the various schools. Some schools are well supplied and appear to get what they want without difficulty, but there are others where I have been unable to examine in certain work for the want of suitable maps. Such a thing could not occur were the plan suggested by me in a special note adopted for the schools. The matter is one of urgency, for, as pointed out in my report last year, "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 help 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 environments."

*Examinations.*—All the school examinations were completed by the end of November, and the remaining portion of the year was spent in inspection and in the examination of candidates for the Board's scholarships.

I notice that the average number on the school-roll for the year as summarised from the returns for each quarter of the year was 7,600; whilst the number on the examination schedules, as already explained, was 7,348. The comparison shows that class registration varies very little during the year, and this aspect of school-keeping may be set down as satisfactory. The pupils belonging to the preparatory classes are fewer than last year, but the proportion of older children in these classes is still unusually large. Considering the kind of studies in the lower classes it is somewhat discouraging to find 630 children in the schools over 8 years of age and who are unable to pass into Standard I. Most of them, I find, are late-comers at school, but they also include the dull, the slow, the indifferent, and the irregular ones. Roger Ascham somewhere remarks that "hard wits prove best in every kind of life," and it may be that the slow ones in the lower classes overtake the others before the completion of the standard course, although I think it unlikely that such is the case. It seems to me proper to allow lady teachers who are in charge of the preparatory classes to exercise their own free judgment in promoting their children to a higher class. A wide basis and good grounding form the best possible qualifications for admittance to the standard course, and, although some may be late in quitting the preparatory classes, the average age of those who pass the several standards is by no means high. Of those who are returned as attending school at the time of my examinations, 4,673 were in standards and 2,624 in the preparatory classes. The pupils who were actually present at examination in the standards, excluding 32 pupils in the class above Standard VI., was 4,559, or 110 more than in the previous year.