1904.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:

REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.–1B, 1903.]

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

AUCKLAND.

SIR,— Education Board, Auckland, 28th March, 1904.

I have the honour to submit a general report on the public schools of the Auckland District for the year 1903.

The number of schools in operation at the close of the year was 421, including seventy-four half-time schools. This number shows a net increase of seven schools since the close of 1902. Of these, 379 were inspected, one of each pair of half-time schools being visited for this purpose, as well as twenty-one Roman Catholic diocesan schools. In all, 438 schools have been examined; this total includes all the Roman Catholic diocesan schools and the Parnell Orphan Home. The following newly opened schools were not examined: Piriaka, Poro-o-tarao, Woodlands, and Orere (aided).

The examination statistics of the public schools for the year are shown in summary in the following table. The passes in Standards I. to V. were determined, except in very rare instances, by the head teachers; those in Standard VI. were determined by the Inspectors:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
				Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	437	322	...	14 7
" VI.	2,041	1,975	1,491	13 6
" V.	2,808	2,699	2,283	13 1
" IV.	3,297	3,174	2,793	11 11
" III.	3,696	3,546	3,196	10 11
" II.	3,486	3,343	3,118	9 11
" I.	3,452	3,315	3,234	9 0
Preparatory	10,600	9,527	...	7 2
Totals	29,817	27,901	16,115	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

In the Roman Catholic diocesan schools there were 1,723 pupils on the rolls, 1,613 were present at the Inspectors' examinations, and 825 passed in one or other of the standards.

The public schools show for the year an increase of 465 in the roll number, of 319 in the number presented, and of 218 in the number of pupils who passed one or other of the standards. In Standard VI. 75 per cent. of the pupils examined passed.

The promotions of pupils from class to class have for some years past been in the hands of head teachers, and are being more generally made with satisfactory discretion. Specific mention of injudicious promotion is rarely met with in the Inspectors' reports for the year, but it is very noticeable that promotions are relatively less numerous and more strictly earned in the most efficient schools. The superior efficiency of these schools is no doubt largely due to the care with which head teachers deal with this matter. In judging of the discretion displayed in the granting of promotions, the Inspectors have regard chiefly to the ability of the pupils to take up the studies

of the next higher class, and more especially reading, with reasonable readiness and intelligence. Unless pupils are really prepared for taking up the more advanced work of a higher class in the spirit here indicated, they should not be promoted, for the kind of work they can do will be so mechanical as to be practically barren of educative effect. Our system of elementary education no longer holds out any stimulus to premature promotion, and the mechanical and unintelligent work that is its almost unfailing consequence should become more and more rare. Under the new regulations for the inspection and examination of public schools, their efficiency will depend on judicious promotion in the classes below Standard VI. more largely than on any other factor. That head teachers will use a wise discretion in this important matter I have little doubt, but it may still be well to insist on the weight of the responsibility resting on them,

During the year the public schools have fully maintained the satisfactory level of efficiency reached in recent years, and in several directions very fair progress has been made. Most of the larger schools are efficiently conducted, and in a good many the management is highly creditable. The conditions prevailing in schools of this class are by no means as favourable as at first sight they might seem to be. The flow of pupils through them shows a surprising amount of migration, for something like a third of the entire roll number enter every year, while the newcomers are often not on a level with the classes they join. The smaller schools, having a staff of two to four or five teachers, are also in general successfully, and in a large number of cases well, conducted. The appointment of a mistress in the considerable body of schools having an average attendance between 40 and 50 has placed them in a position to do much more satisfactory work, and the improvement secured has been very noticeable. Of the smallest schools—those taught by a sole teacher—a large and growing proportion show satisfactory work.

While improvement in the teaching of reading is noted by most of the Inspectors, some of them remark a deficiency of expression as the commonest failing. This is especially true of the smaller schools, and it seems to be in great part due to an ill-directed and sometimes to an excessive use of simultaneous reading. It is time that public-school teachers recognised that failure to train pupils to read with fluency, accuracy, good phrasing, and reasonable expression is evidence of unskilful teaching. If pupils are to read with expression, the habit must begin in the lowest classes, and be continued right through the school course. Once let them acquire a mechanical and monotonous style, and endless trouble in correcting it must ensue. A bad start in reading is now quite unusual, being rarely met with except in the smallest schools, where changes of teachers are frequent and inexperience is too common. In recent years all the pupils of Standard VI. have been heard read a passage of English prose that they had not previously seen. A great majority of them showed that they had gained a satisfactory command of reading their mother-tongue. About a quarter of them failed to meet this test with reasonable success. These frequently found difficulty in saying longish words of regular pronunciation that they had not seen before. I think more might be done during the school course to make our older pupils ready readers, as will be explained below, and in particular to give them a continuous aud sound training in making out by their own efforts the pronunciation of the many new words that occur in successive reading lessons. These new and hard words are usually arranged in lists at the head or the foot of each reading lesson, properly divided into syllables and accented, ready for giving the training needed. But if they are pronounced by the teacher and repeated after his pattern by the pupils, as is somtimes done, the training in self-help and in gaining the power to grapple with and master the ordinary difficulties of pronunciation is of necessity sacrificed for mere imitative cram-work. The practice of good teachers in dealing with lists of new words is to require the pupils, singly or together, to say the syllables distinctly, and then to say the words as wholes with the accent-emphasis on the proper syllable. This practice should obtain in all schools.

In the higher divisions of the primer classes and in Standards I. and II. more reading than is now done might be overtaken with advantage, and the Board should authorise the use of additional Readers for these, and indeed for the higher classes too, as a wider course of reading can be occasionally overtaken in the latter. It is undesirable to go over any reading-book twice in the primer classes, and in the standard classes it would certainly be better to read through two supplementary Readers once than to read one twice over, as is now commonly done. We should thus secure more continuous interest in the reading lessons arising from their novelty, and pupils would gain confidence and readiness by extended practice in reading easy words in ever new combinations. It is no easy matter to maintain lively interest and good attention in dealing with stale reading lessons. I am of opinion that it would be a great gain to real education if the chief reading-books in the higher classes were changed every three years. It is a mere bogey to suppose that this change would involve any serious extra expense to parents, for the life of an ordinary school Reader seldom reaches three years. Even were some extra cost involved, it would be amply compensated by the educational gain. Improvement in the comprehension of the matter and language of the lessons in the New Zealand Graphic Readers continues to be made, but there is still much room for progress. The teaching of this aspect of English is, indeed, one of the weaker points in our schools, and it is seldom that the Inspectors find it readily dealt with by pupils or even skilfully handled by teachers. Though a good deal of time is devoted to it, the results are not commensurate with the effort put forth. Practice in paraphrasing difficult phrases or short sentences of prose in writing would help on improvement, and so would the more frequent and indeed the habitual use by the older pupils of a good dictionary in finding out the meaning of uncommon words; but it is mainly by lively and stimulating oral work that the defect here noted is to be amended.

Spelling is, on the whole, well taught, and mistakes in spelling easy and familiar words in written exercises other than dictation tests are becoming less prevalent. These mistakes are usually due to mere carelessness, and are indications rather of indifferent discipline than of indifferent teaching.

Writing still improves, though slowly; it is good in a large number of schools of all grades. Pen-holding and a proper posture receive more careful and vigilant attention; but a good many teachers either think attention to these details of trifling importance or fail to see that they have not the influence with their pupils that is needed for securing constant attention to them. I have good authority for saying that in writing and in neat and methodical arrangement the papers done by the Auckland pupils at the recent National Scholarship Examination were not surpassed by those of any other district of the colony.

Freehand drawing is, on the whole, very satisfactorily taught, and in many schools the exercises are well done. In the latter a higher type of exercise than that illustrated in the text-books authorised by the Minister is invariably undertaken, and proves much more interesting and stimulating. The geometrical exercises, the scale drawing, and the solid geometry are also in general satisfactory, more especially in the larger schools. I am of opinion that School Committees should be required to provide a supply of suitable sheets of drawing-paper, so that the tests in drawing at the Inspector's examinations might be done on paper in the Inspector's presence, and I would recommend the Board to take action accordingly. This plan has been followed in some parts of the colony for several years past with great advantage. Brush drawing has been taken up in some of the larger schools and occasionally in smaller ones, and in general fair initial work is being done. Books containing definite suitable courses of work for the guidance of teachers, and for use by the pupils in at least the smaller schools, would be of service in connection with this new form of drawing and colour-work.

In arithmetic good and frequently excellent work has been done in Standard III. and the lower classes. In the upper classes little or no improvement can be noted, and there are in some schools indications that the teaching of it in Standards V. and VI. is going back. In particular, problems are less intelligently dealt with than in the past. This is no doubt partly due to the very easy examination tests given of late years by the Department in Standard III. and upwards, and especially in Standards III., IV., and V. It is, however, partly due to faults of teaching, chiefly to insufficient blackboard drill in explanatory work, and to the giving of injudicious or unnecessary assistance in solving problems and typical examples. One cannot say with confidence what teachers usually do, but when Inspectors are about it is very common for them to keep their classes continually occupied in working sets of examples on slates, while they themselves move about the desks criticizing or giving helpful hints. To devote much of their time to this sort of work is surely to use it to little purpose. It were far better did they dedicate most of the time thus spent to taking a section of a large class, or, where classes are small, the whole of a small class, at the blackboard, eliciting and noting fully and precisely the various steps and the reasons for them. For desk supervision, a few minutes stolen now and then from the board drill, and a checking of answers at the close of the time, would amply suffice. When examples have been carefully worked out at the board, several pupils should be required to state concisely the steps taken in doing them. Were the procedure here recommended more generally adopted, and were pupils further trained in explaining fully how they would work out examples read out from their class-books, I have little doubt that we should secure a greater power in dealing with problems, and a better mental discipline as well. The class-books in arithmetic in general use do not answer our purpose as well as could be wished. They contain far too many examples, and it is probably the attempt to get over all of these that leads to the excessive amount of desk-work above referred to. In the higher rules the numbers employed in the examples are too often large and unwieldly, so that their working becomes primarily a tax on accuracy, and the training in reasoning and in clear methodical statement lapses into the background. It is to be hoped that the books prepared in connection with the new syllabus will avoid the fault of superfluity of matter as well as of unnecessary length and complexity in working. Drill in applying the simple process of arithmetic is best got by suitable examples in the simple and compound rules (money). In all the higher rules where reasoning and interpreting conditions form the chief difficulty of the exercises, simple easily managed examples are desirable, when much of the working could and should be done mentally.

As to the teaching of composition, Mr. Grierson notes a decided improvement in the schools of his district (the Southern). The other Inspectors find it on the whole satisfactory. In most schools little fault is to be found with the grammatical accuracy of the exercises, or the division of the matter into sentences, but in fullness and natural sequence of suitable matter, in clearness and force of statement, and in alternation of shorter and longer sentences there is still much room for progress. The lack of intelligence that shows itself in connection with the explanation of the language and matter of the reading lessons produces its effect in the sphere of composition also, and, of course, it is not a favourable one. It seems to me that many of our teachers have not given sufficiently serious thought to their methods of teaching this subject, and that they do not adequately avail themselves of the variety of exercises that are open to use. In Standard IV., for example, reproducing a story read to a class, giving in brief the substance of a lesson from the reading-books or the substance of a poem from the same, writing an exercise from brief heads supplied on the blackboard, or one without heads on some familiar subject, telling the story of a picture shown, describing an experiment shown in science, &c., are all open for a teacher to use, but only two or three of these types of exercises are commonly turned to account. In Standards V. and VI. in particular a good training in oral composition might be given by answering questions on the matter of the reading lessons, and giving in other simple language the substance of paragraphs from the same. The discipline may be a very valuable one, and it would pay our teachers to give it the large amount of attention that it receives in the elementary schools of the Mother-land. Mr. Mulgan agrees with me in tracing the weakness in composition of our older pupils to faults of teaching. This is what he says: "That we do not in Standard VI. more frequently meet with exercises distinguished by strength and clearness points, I think, to teaching which demands no

higher standard than freedom from grammatical and orthographical errors." To teach a higher type of work we must give our pupils clear ideas of what we are striving to achieve, and must get them to work steadily and consciously towards these aims.

The teaching of the class subjects continues on the whole satisfactory. In general geography there has been a noticeable improvement both in the accuracy and in the breadth of what has been taught, but physical geography is still imperfectly known. There are schools in which this branch of the subject is not taken up till late in the year. The time is then too short for treating it clearly and intelligently; all that can be done is to learn the book by heart. Needless to say, this is pure cram, a counterfeit of real teaching that no true teacher could bring himself to use. To treat the subject adequately its study must be spread over the whole year.

In future the study of formal grammar is to be greatly restricted. On the wisdom of this course there is much difference of opinion, but our pupils will welcome the change, for they seldom apply themselves to its study with ardour or even with willingness.

The teaching of science in the larger schools is receiving more thoughtful attention, and the knowledge gained is becoming more definite wherever clear notes of experiments and principles are regularly taken down in exercise-books. This practice should be in general use, unless pupils have simple text-books on the subject in their hands. Occasional short written examinations will afford scope for the practice of composition, and do much to let pupils and teachers see where they stand.

The instruction in agricultural science has long been too extensive and theoretical, and all must welcome the more concrete and concise courses which it will now be possible to arrange. Little has been done during the year in the direction of equipping schools with suitable apparatus for science-teaching.

On the whole, object lessons are being chosen with better judgment, and they are often worthily treated, though many of them, if properly named, are simply information lessons.

In many schools some form of handwork is now taken up, and in several directions teachers have got beyond the stage of feeling their way. Cane-weaving and paper-folding are often efficiently taught, and in a few schools creditable work in modelling and designing in plasticine has been seen. Much of the plasticine-work of primer pupils is rough and without finish, and appears a doubtful means of educative training.

In most of the Auckland and suburban schools the pupils of Standards V. and VI. have taken woodwork or cookery at the manual-training centres organized under the advice of the Director of Technical Education. Good work is being done at these centres, and in general the classes are popular and well appreciated.

Owing to the conditions imposed by the Education Department for the earning of grants in aid of handwork and manual training, classes S5 and S6 of the larger schools that have sent all their pupils to the manual-training centres have been disturbed and disorganized to an extent that is most undesirable, if not actually intolerable. This has elicited earnest and well-grounded complaints from head teachers, for during most of the year drafts of their two highest-standard classes have been absent at manual-training classes during three and in some instances during four half-days each week. This is clearly a very serious interference with the conditions of instruction in these classes, and may very well involve bad consequences, which even the real and the imaginary virtues of manual training may fail to counterbalance. I am of opinion that this interference should in all cases be restricted to two half-days a week, and I would recommend the Board to urge on the Minister the alteration of the manual-training regulations so as to reduce the interference to this as a maximum.

Singing is taught in the great majority of our schools with very fair success, and it is frequently good. It is, however, but little used to form a cheerful break or interlude in the daily routine of work, being, except in infant departments, rarely heard outside the time of the special lesson. In this matter I cannot but think head teachers unwisely wilful.

Sewing often calls for closer and more vigilant supervision, for improper ways of working are still too prevalent. Beginners should be everywhere provided with suitable short needles, that they may from the first learn to hold and use the needle properly. With the long needles usually given them it is almost impossible for them to set about the work in the right manner. In the smallest schools, where there is no female teacher on the staff, sewing is now being taught as a branch of handwork, and in no school need it be any longer neglected.

The primer classes continue to be well taught, and their teachers have of late brought an amount of thought and of cheerful industry to hear on their work that calls for high commendation. Even in most of the smaller schools these classes are doing very satisfactory work. It would make the teaching of reading brighter and more interesting if one or two additional easy reading-books were gone through in these classes. In no case should a reading-book be gone through twice, though weekly revisals should be continued, and the new lessons involving a knowledge of much the same easy and familiar words would present only sufficient difficulty to make the exercise fresh and stimulating. In several schools a wider course of reading has been undertaken, as much to the delight as to the advantage of the children. This is a change I would strongly recommend to all who have to deal with pupils at this stage. Mr. Mulgan notes very truly that there is a tendency to keep pupils too long in the primer classes—a tendency more conspicuously shown in the larger schools than in the smaller ones. In all, however, the rate of progress in reading might well be more rapid, and this would no doubt be favoured by the more extensive and more interesting course of reading recommended above.

There has been some improvement in the training in oral answering, but it is not so carefully or so intelligently directed as it deserves to be. The order in the schools is in general very good, and the discipline is also good. Still, carelessness in spelling familiar words, the trouble in securing good oral answering, and the chronic pen-holding difficulty all indicate an indifference to the teacher's wishes and instructions that is a distinct blot on discipline.

The Board's teachers as a body show a high sense of duty, and are earnest and industrious in their professional work, while many display a zeal and enthusiasm that deserve the highest praise. The younger teachers, as a rule, show a readiness to learn that augurs well for the future.

For some months Mr. Mulgan, at my request, undertook the instruction of the class in practical science at the Technical School, which the Director owing to his long and serious illness was unable to continue. For his readiness in undertaking this task, at considerable personal inconvenience, while at the same time devoting more than four days a week to his ordinary duties as an Inspector, he deserves the hearty thanks of the Board.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Auckland Education Board. D. Petrie, M.A., Chief Inspector.

TARANAKI.

Sir,— New Plymouth, 7th April, 1904.

We have the honour to lay before you our annual report for the year ending the 31st December, 1903.

During the year seventy-three schools were open, and, with the exception of the newly-opened school at Waitui, all were examined. In accordance with the arrangement made with the Auckland Board, the Mokau School was examined and inspected, and copies of the reports were forwarded to the Auckland Board.

The following table contains a summary of the examination results:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.	
				Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII.	72	67	...	14	5
" VI.	221	214	154	13	10
" V.	376	367	261	13	4
" IV.	588	571	398	12	7
" III.	610	587	477	11	7
" II.	660	644	543	10	3
" I.	617	588	504	9	2
Preparatory	1,654	1,412	...	7	2
Totals	4,798	4,450	2,337	11	6*

* Mean of average age.

As compared with the return for 1902, the following increases are shown: Roll, 112; present at the Inspector's annual visit, 79; passed, 191. The number of pupils absent from examination was 348—106 in the standards, and 242 in the preparatory classes. The number of absentees was thirty-one more than in the previous year, and seems large, especially in the preparatory classes; but it must be remembered that, if the examination-day happens to be very wet, little children that have any distance to travel will of course not attend. Sickness is the cause generally assigned for the absence of a pupil in a standard class. The number of pupils in Standard VII. shows an increase of five. Of the sixty-seven pupils in Standard VII., forty-two were receiving free tuition in secondary subjects at the Stratford District High School, and, in addition to these, forty ex-Standard VI. pupils were enjoying a similar privilege at the New Plymouth High School. In last year's report it was anticipated that seventy or eighty ex-Standard-VI. pupils would be receiving free tuition in the district at the end of the year, and we are pleased to see that the estimate was near the mark. On the 31st March of the current year sixty-one pupils were receiving free tuition at the Stratford District High School.

Near the close of the year the Board consented to the examination of the Roman Catholic schools by the Inspectors. During the current year, therefore, we shall make two visits to each of the schools in New Plymouth, Stratford, and Opunake. With two exceptions all schools were inspected, a result unattained during the last few years.

All schools are now working under the conditions imposed by the Public-school Teachers' Salaries Act. At the close of the year all standards were admitted to the West End School, and the salaries of some of the assistants in the larger schools were altered. It is a matter for regret that the salaries of responsible assistants in the larger schools have not been increased, though the inadequacy has been so frequently pointed out.

In not fewer than thirty-eight schools were there changes in the staff. Large and small schools were affected, and, in consequence, continuous and steady work was materially interfered with. Of what may be termed Taranaki teachers, in that they had been in the district for any length of time, none left for other districts. Eight of our female teachers resigned, the majority having transferred their affections and sympathies from infants to adults. Ten teachers from other districts received employment, principally as assistants or as teachers of small schools. Many vacancies occurring during the year were filled by transferring teachers to better positions.

As was reported last year, teachers as a whole exercised sound judgment in promoting pupils in Standards I. to V., and in comparatively few instances was it necessary to substitute the Inspector's results for those of the teacher, though more frequently the teacher's results were modified. The system of promotion of the pupils on examinations held by the teacher is the outcome of a revolt against the excessive examinations which formerly prevailed. In New Zealand the change was initiated in the lower standards. In 1894 teachers were given the sole control of the promotions in Standard I. and Standard II., and, no matter how unsatisfactory an Inspector might consider the promotions, he had no powers of revision. In 1900 a further step was taken, and teachers examined for promotion pupils in Standard I. to Standard V., but power of revision was given to the Inspector. Records of passes were, however, still kept; but in the regulations recently issued standard passes are practically abolished, and examination by an Inspector is demanded only in certain cases—viz., when a pupil desires to obtain a "certificate of competency" to enable him (1) to enter some branch of the public service, (2) to obtain exemption under the School-attendance Act, and (3) to enter a secondary school. An examination for a "certificate of proficiency" in Standard VI. is provided for, and if the condition regarding age is fulfilled this entitles the holder to free tuition at a secondary school or at a district high school. An Inspector may, however, examine all the pupils in a class or school, and for a stated time may substitute his classification for that of the teacher. In order to test whether the system of promotion by the teacher had worked well so far as the children were concerned, in all classes of schools we examined a proportion of the pupils larger than in the two previous years. The impression left was that there was a slight falling-off in the thoroughness of the work. In many schools there were noticed compensations in the broader and more intelligent treatment of the subjects. Freedom of classification by the teacher, or the substitution of inspection for combined inspection and examination, can be carried beyond the limits of safety. Of late years the question has been widely discussed, and, as is usually the case in similar circumstances, antipathy against an old system has tended to make the pendulum of opinion swing from one extreme to the other. Many advocate the entire abolition of examination, and the substitution of inspection only, and in some countries this has been adopted. We consider that examination has advantages that cannot be overlooked. It is searching in its results, and, as a pupil is thrown on his own resources, he must exercise self-reliance, concentration, and application, which are by no means valueless. We believe that without disadvantage it can be minimised, but the minimum must be determined by the circumstances of each school. In a well-organized and well-governed large school much can be left to the head teacher, and in a school with a strong, earnest, and skilful staff examination is necessary only in so far as it may serve an important end in guiding the Inspector in offering suggestions and in giving assistance to the staff. In other schools less favourably circumstanced —and we venture to consider these are the majority—more examination is necessary, but still with the same end in view—suggestion of remedies after discovery of defects. Take the case of a young and earnest but inexperienced teacher. At a visit of inspection the Inspector may watch the teaching, give encouragement, suggest improvement, or teach classes or divisions. He can find out whether the teacher is following the right or the wrong path, but very little of the work, as a whole, comes under review. One, or possibly two lessons, in, say, arithmetic, may have been seen. These may have been well taught, but how, except by examination, is one to find out if the whole of the arithmetic is well taught? In this subject (and in others) we get the teacher to mark the work, and find out the nature of the errors. We then go over it with the teacher, and, taking into consideration the methods adopted, the neatness of the setting-out, the character of any errors made, assign marks. If any defect is general the teacher sees it at once, and can apply the remedy. Such an examination has a high educative value, and the insight given into the work is deeper than could possibly be obtained by any system of inspection alone. In the case of the country teacher who has no experienced head teacher or colleague at hand from whom to get advice and assistance, the greatest benefit is derived. Moreover, the success of a teacher depends upon factors other than skill in giving single lessons. He must display ability in linking the lessons of a subject into a continuous whole, in co-ordinating one subject with another, in leading the pupils to grasp the principles underlying the lessons, and in treating the whole work in such a way that the pupil assimilates the lessons, and is not stuffed with indigestible scraps. By means of the instruction-book, which contains a record of the work done in a school throughout the year, we are enabled to combine the advantages of both inspection and examination at all visits, and can thus render the maximum of assistance to the earnest teachers, and stimulate the less earnest ones. The importance of the subject must excuse our noticing the following case of an inspection: In the report of the recent Commission appointed by New South Wales, one of the Commissioners states that in London he saw a school—and not a satisfactory one—of three hundred pupils inspected by two Inspectors who left "after a visit of a little more than two hours." The senior Inspector "was good enough to give his views on inspection and examination," and discussed the work and organization of the school with the head teacher, adversely criticizing the work of the teacher of Standard V. "There was no examination in grammar, object lessons, drawing, or singing" in any class. The Commissioner says, "It appeared to the Commissioner, when seeing the school inspected, that if the system of testing school-work erred too much on the side of mechanical results, the system in the Board schools of London did not show satisfactory results with a free standard. The actual standard sufficient to satisfy the Inspector was of course known only to that official, but the conclusion formed from observation was that it was low." The regulations in this colony have struck a happier mean between two extremes. Examination alone is pernicious, but inspection alone is certainly superficial and misleading. Either or both should be used as judgment dictates with regard to the best interests of the pupils and the teacher.

The third Conference of School Inspectors was held in January last, and the new regulations for the inspection and examination were discussed at length, and then submitted to a joint con-

ference of teachers and Inspectors. Alterations of a more or less technical character were recommended, and the necessity for lightening the work in small schools was emphasized. Even if all the recommendations are given effect to, in its great essentials and on its broad lines the syllabus will remain practically the same as when it left the printer's hands. The principles enunciated are not new. They are familiar to every teacher and pupil-teacher. That instruction must proceed from the known to the unknown, from the concrete to the abstract, from the easy to the difficult, and so on, is as well known to the teachers as are the laws of gravitation to the physicist. Even a cursory glance will convince the most casual reader that the syllabus is framed in accordance with these principles. The syllabus has been spoken of as a new syllabus, the implication being that teachers must abandon their former methods and adopt others entirely new. This fallacy should be easily detected. Methods do not follow a syllabus, but a syllabus follows methods; and as methods are more and more rationalised so will curricula be from time to time altered. In fact, methods are the advance-guard, and a syllabus is the rear-guard in the march of education. The changes going on at present are not in principles, but in the adaptation and application of principles to changing conditions. The vast growth of scientific knowledge, the increased knowledge of human physiology, and a consequent clearer apprehension of child-nature and child-need have rendered it necessary that old principles must be adapted to the new conditions, and it is only in this sense that methods can be called new. Physical phenomena, plant-life, animal-life, and generally the world around us are assuming, as a means of mental training, an importance formerly not attached to them. The hand and the eye, as means of developing brain-power, are more and more recognised. The child is led to handle and to observe, to think about his observations, to reason from them, to draw correct conclusions, and within his capacity to formulate easy inductions, and thus to arrive at correct notions of simple natural laws. In fact, the world becomes a living world, and is not something altogether apart from himself.

With regard to the matter of the syllabus two questions arise: Is it right in kind? Is it reasonable in quantity? The answer to the former must be that in kind it has certainly been altered for the better, and is more in keeping with present conditions than were its predecessors. The geography prescribed is such as can be taught rationally as a series of object lessons, and in a way that appeals to the child's mind. Grammar as an analytical study of language has disappeared, and is to be taught only in so far as it is an aid to composition. In the past too much time was devoted to the subtleties of classification, parsing, and so on, such as can be understood only after a good knowledge of the language has been acquired. This is now swept away to make room for a closer study and a more intelligent grasp of the principles governing the synthesis of sentences. In this subject methods have been strikingly ahead of the syllabus, and though composition is now prescribed for Standard II., our present preparatory pupils could pass the test with the greatest ease. The courses in arithmetic, spelling, and so on, have been modified to make them better in kind, so that a pupil may be trained and not strained. With regard to the quantity to be taught, there has been much misconception, owing to courses from which teachers were to select matter being taken as though all the matter had to be taught, and one or two obscurities of wording encouraged this idea. The schemes of work which were subjected to the most adverse criticism are arranged to suit schools from the North Cape to the Bluff, but great latitude is allowed the teacher in selecting what may best suit the geographical position of the school, the environment of the pupils, the size of the school, and the teacher's qualifications and bent. In drawing up his programme of work he will consider these points, and select matter with which he is familiar, and in which he is most interested. He will thus be better able to arouse the interest and stimulate the intelligence of his pupils. People outside of New Zealand can form an opinion of our education system only by perusing official publications; and, as we said to the teachers of the district, after the Wellington Conference—"We are convinced that, from the new regulations, the opinion formed will be much higher than from previous regulations." A very long and laudatory notice of our regulations has since appeared in one of the Sydney papers, and we are satisfied that wherever they are read they will create a good impression. But in reality to find out what our education system is we must go deeper. The workers know that the education system is not the syllabus, but the quiet, steady, and unostentatious school-work based upon the ideals of teachers and Inspectors—not what is taught, but what the children take away with them. Nor can success be gauged by the percentage of brilliant scholars turned out, but by the extent to which the intelligence of the mass of the pupils has been trained. If our pupils leave school equipped to take no ignoble part in life; if they admire that which is admirable, despise that which is despicable, and develop manly and womanly characteristics; if they acquire some taste or develop some tendency that will impel them to pursue some study, or, shall we say, hobby "for the love of the working," and thus prevent their seeking amusement and recreation in larrikinism; if, in a word, they enter school with one talent and leave it with two, five, or ten, our education system approaches an ideal.

An important matter submitted to the Conference of Inspectors was the establishment of training colleges. The Conference unanimously expressed the opinion that one strongly equipped central college would produce better results than would three or four separate colleges established in the larger centres. The importance of the training of teachers cannot be overestimated, and it is to be hoped that in a short time ex-pupil-teachers will be able to receive all the advantages to be derived from such institutions. In the past the training of our pupil-teachers has been by no means neglected. Courses of practical lessons have been drawn up, and the pupil-teachers have been collected in certain centres for criticism lessons, discussion of methods, and instruction in the principles and art of teaching. The scheme has worked very well, and produced good results. Indeed, great emphasis has been laid upon the need for training the pupil-teachers in the actual work of their profession, and literary success has been subordinated to skill in teaching. At the

same time we were pleased to notice that at the recent examination for teachers' certificates two of our candidates did very well in the paper on school-management. In the whole colony only three candidates obtained marks entitling them to "special mention," and two of these were Taranaki pupil-teachers in only their third year. We do not know how many candidates sat for school-management, but among them would be many ex-pupil-teachers, and trainees from the two training colleges.

During the year manual work was undertaken, and recognised by the Department in a little under half of the schools of the district, and in many cases a marked improvement was noticeable in the intelligence with which the subjects were treated and co-ordinated with the rest of the school-work. Indeed, the teachers are making strenuous efforts to remedy what was last year pointed out as a defect, and are more and more looking upon manual work in its proper light—a method of teaching. Classes for the instruction of teachers were continued, and were well attended. The sending-out of apparatus and material, and the keeping of accounts in connection with the manual work takes up a great deal of the Inspectors' time.

Early in the year the Board appointed W. A. Ballantyne, B.A., as Assistant Inspector, and in consequence the inspection visits have been overtaken more fully than was formerly possible, and even visits beyond what are required by regulation were paid. The control of manual and technical work, and the accounts in connection therewith, have been transferred to the Inspectors, and take up much time, which, however, is necessary if manual and technical training is to advance in the district.

The work of the schools as a whole shows steady progress, and in many cases the changes in the staffs did not militate against the continuity of the work to the extent that might have been expected. Science, however, does not make the progress the importance of the subject deserves, and this is due in a great measure to the lack of apparatus. Costly apparatus is not necessary, and we recommend that subsidies, such as were formerly given by the Board towards the establishment of libraries, be granted in order that Committees and teachers may make every effort to put the subject on a more satisfactory footing. A considerable proportion of the smaller country schools are doing very good work, and a word of special commendation is due to the teachers for the high standard of efficiency attained often under adverse conditions. Teachers are encouraged to visit other schools, and thus see methods other than their own. One can always learn something from such a visit—something worthy of imitation, something to be avoided. Much good has thus been done, and leave of absence is always granted.

We have, &c.,

W. E. Spencer, M.A., B.Sc.,
W. A. Ballantyne, B.A., } Inspectors.

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.

WANGANUI.

Sir,— Education Office, Wanganui, 10th March, 1904.

We have the honour to submit our report for the year ended the 31st December, 1903.

During the year there were in active operation 165 schools, an increase of ten on the previous year. Of these 159 were examined—that is, all that had been open for twelve months; and nearly all were inspected. In addition we examined the five Catholic schools in the district. The new schools opened during the year were Aberfeldie, Glen Oroua, Himitangi, Kawabata, Mangamingi, Opaku, Pukeroa, Rata-iti, Table Flat (reopened), Tapuae, Tokorangi, and Umutoi. We show below the number of schools examined and the number of children present at examination for each of the last nine years. This ought to be of general interest as indicating the growth and progress of settlement in the district: 1895—schools 106, children 9,503; 1896—schools 114, children 9,786; 1897—schools 116, children 9,827; 1898—schools 125, children 10,176; 1899—schools 129, children 10,330; 1900—schools 129, children 10,361; 1901—schools 141, children, 10,844; 1902—schools 143, children 11,186; 1903—schools 159, children 11,924. From the above it will be seen that the increase in the number of children was much greater for 1903 than for any preceding year.

The following is a summary of examination results for the district:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Absent.	Failed	Passed	Per Cent. of Passes on		Average Age of Pupils in Each Class.
						Number on Roll.	Number present.	
								Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	384	366	18	...	...	...	...	15 0
" VI.	783	747	36	143	604	77	80	13 10
" V.	1,095	1,048	47	127	921	84	87	13 0
" IV.	1,461	1,402	59	185	1,217	83	86	12 3
" III.	1,493	1,438	55	176	1,262	84	87	11 3
" II.	1,520	1,454	66	114	1,340	88	92	9 11
" I.	1,452	1,398	54	68	1,330	91	95	8 11
Preparatory	3,736	3,223	513	...	...	...	...	7 0
Totals	11,924	11,076	848	813	6,674	85	89	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

Examinations by the Head Teacher.—These have been faithfully carried out, and in the main due care has been exercised in awarding promotions from class to class. Some teachers, however, have been so anxious to obtain what they call a "good pass" that they have given promotions where they were not deserved. In not a few cases we had, after very careful examination, to reverse the teacher's decision. It must ever be borne in mind that every weak pass granted tells as much against the district as against the school in which it is given; and where any doubt exists as to the child's fitness for promotion a pass should not be awarded. Under the new *régime* the words "pass" and "fail," so far as Standards I. to V. are concerned, will be abolished; but there is none the less need for teachers to be on their guard against promoting undeserving children. Every such promotion will sooner or later resolve itself into a "stripe for the teacher's own back." Frequently we found that the results of a single examination held immediately before the Inspector's visit were made the sole ground for promotion. This should not be. One of the chief reasons for laying upon teachers the onus of the classification of their pupils is that they are in a position to base their promotions on their estimate of the pupils formed from their work generally, and from the results they achieve in periodical examinations held during the year.

Infant-room Work.—This department received extra prominence owing to the presence in the district, for a period of six months, of Miss Eva Hooper, whose services the Board was fortunate to secure. Miss Hooper has had large experience in kindergarten methods, in giving instructions in various branches of manual work suitable for the lower classes, and in lecturing to teachers upon educational subjects. She conducted teachers' classes at Wanganui, Palmerston, and Hawera, and visited as many of our infant-rooms as she could in the time at her disposal. Those who attended the classes regularly, and who have striven to give effect to the instruction given by Miss Hooper, speak in terms of high appreciation of the stimulus and help they received. In her reports on the various schools, Miss Hooper emphasizes some defects in the teaching of our primer classes which all infant-room teachers, and, indeed, all teachers, would do well to ponder over. On the teaching of arithmetic, she says, "Very little concrete teaching is given. Scarcely any attempt is made to make the children realise the value of numbers. There is too much figure-writing before the children know the value of the numbers for which they stand. Too much time is wasted over the simultaneous repetition of tables. If children are taught the value of the early numbers well, there is no need for the continual singsong repetition which is done with no idea of the meaning at the back of the words." On the teaching of reading and writing, Miss Hooper has the following: "The common method of teaching reading is by pattern reading. The teacher reads the new work and the children copy. This is not reading at all, but learning by heart. It is a common practice also in word-building and writing to give children practice in sounds and in combinations of sounds and letters which do not occur in the language at all. When special practice is required in P. III. for certain joins as 'gl,' 'fl,' &c., why should not children be required to use the words beginning so in a sentence? Then writing, spelling, and composition would all go hand in hand." In her reports Miss Hooper continually emphasizes the need of more observational and conversational work; she condemns that antiquated form of object lesson which aims merely at giving instruction, and generally fails in arousing interest and in developing the pupil's powers of expression.

Arithmetic.—Judged from the results of our examination, this subject is, in quite a number of schools, especially in Standards IV., V., and VI., in anything but a creditable condition. After making due allowance for out-of-the-way questions which not infrequently found a place on some of the cards, and for the interruptions which many of the schools suffered during the year on account of prevalent epidemics, we are forced to the conclusion that there is a want of thoroughness about the teaching of arithmetic in the upper classes. A really good Standard IV., Standard V., or Standard VI. in this subject was a rare occurrence. The most striking feature, and the one which gives greatest cause for alarm, was that in a great many instances mistakes were made in straightforward questions. The inference is that sufficient individual supervision is not given. Let a lesson be ever so well taught, it fails in its effect if the individual pupils are not made to master and apply its contents for themselves. It is possible to give too much blackboard demonstration. It is what the pupil does for himself that is of most value to him. We would indorse what Miss Hooper has said about the instruction in number given to the primer classes. It is here that foundations should be laid deep and strong; and it is here that they must be laid if good work is to be possible in the higher classes. Tables should be so thoroughly grounded and understood before children pass into the standards that inaccuracies in working of sums should be the exception and not the rule. Too often more than enough has been attempted. If as a rule the numbers up to ten were done thoroughly in the first year of a pupil's school life and up to twenty in the second year we should have more satisfactory results. Let every possible combination of these numbers be known, let addition and subtraction go hand in hand, and let the elements of multiplication and division be done concretely in such a limited range as we have prescribed, and we feel sure that more gratifying results will be achieved, and more interest will be kindled in what in the early stage is often an uninteresting subject. It is a matter for adverse comment that mental arithmetic does not hold the prominent place it should in the teaching of arithmetic. In fact, in some schools it is entirely neglected, and we find that the simplest operations are gone through laboriously on slates when they might easily be performed mentally. Mental arithmetic should form part of every arithmetic lesson, and children should be encouraged to dispense with slate working wherever they can. For example, in Standard VI. it is quite the rule to have such decimals as 0.25, 0.125, 0.625 put down and reduced on slate, and operations like $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{5}$, $\frac{4}{5} \times \frac{5}{6}$, &c., treated in the same laborious fashion. Sufficient mental drill would alter all this, and the result would be more rapid and more accurate work.

Reading.—This year, in a majority of the schools, the pupils in the various classes were tested from a book which they had not previously seen. The book used was in the case of each

class at least one grade easier than the class Reader. Such a test eliminates the "memory element" which, especially in the classes below Standard IV., counts for a good deal when the pupils are using a book which they have read perhaps three times at least. In some schools the strange book was read just as fluently and as expressively as the class Reader; in others the result was quite otherwise: pupils who could read fluently from their own book had often difficulty in making out similar words and phrases occurring in the strange book, showing clearly that in the apparent fluent reading from their class-books memory was playing a very important part. Generally speaking, the mechanical aspect of the reading lesson is sufficiently recognised. It must not be forgotten, however, that ability "to phrase accurately, to enunciate distinctly, and to render expressively" any suitable passage that may be presented constitutes, after all, only the lesser of the two objects for which reading appears in the syllabus. The other and infinitely more important object is that the pupils should be able to understand what they read, and that they should be able in a measure to appreciate the beauty and suitability of the phrases and words used in the lessons. The teaching of reading "should awaken an interest in and an appreciation for good literature. To teach children to read without developing in them a spirit of literary appreciation is to do but a small part of our duty." Their attention should be continually directed both in prose and in poetry to words, phrases, or lines which are aptly and appropriately used. We would direct the attention of teachers to the following points in connection with the teaching of reading. They suggest remedies for certain outstanding defects.

(1.) Definite teaching should be given to each class in syllabification; particular care being taken to insure purity of vowel-sound. Here is a series of words which might profitably be given every day in every school: *house, pound, ground, round, bounce, how, cow, now, brown, gown,* &c. A very marked tendency exists in some parts to convert *the* into *thay, be* into *bay, he* into *hay,* &c. Incidental teaching in this matter is not sufficient to correct tendencies which are fast becoming fixed habits of speech. Teachers should note carefully the peculiarities of their districts, and by constant daily practice endeavour to get rid of the defects they notice.

(2.) More attention should be given to subject-matter. The pupils should be interested in the lesson before they begin to read it in class. If they have read it at home they should be questioned upon its contents. At the end of the lesson a summary of it should be asked from the class. Geographical and historical allusions should always be touched upon.

(3.) A certain number of words and phrases should be dealt with—not necessarily those which are most abstruse, but those which are most apt and most striking. Pupils should be trained to pick out expressions which strike them as being suitable.

What we have said with regard to reading applies with even greater force to recitation, which in many schools means nothing more than learning so many lines "by heart." The following specimen questions on poems which are frequently found on the lists presented for Standards III. and V. will serve as an indication of the method in which the subject-matter of the poetry might be dealt with:—

(*a.*) "The Child's First Grief": What was the child's first grief? Where did this child miss his brother most? Quote the lines which show this. What kind of a child was the one who died? What lines tell us this? To what flower is he compared? quote the line. Where had they played together? quote the lines, &c.

(*b.*) "Burial of Sir John Moore": Who was Sir John Moore? Where was he killed? give the circumstances. Give the line which describes the night on which he was buried. Have you ever seen a night such as is described in the words "The struggling moonbeams' misty light"?

Give from another poem you have learned lines which describe the death of a soldier. The children may remember "He wrapped his colours round his breast, on a blood-red field of Spain," &c.

Composition.—This subject includes all the teaching which aims at giving a child ability to speak and write good, pure English. Ability to render orally a complete story is as much a test of the pupil's efficiency in composition as is his ability to give the same story on paper in the form of an essay. Too much is probably being made of the written essay, too little of the oral effort; and yet it is just as important that we should produce good speakers as good writers. Indeed, from the point of view of school-work, there will never be the best work in written essays until oral composition in some form or other has been allotted a prominent place in every standard. One of the following lessons should be of daily occurrence in the lower classes: (*a*) Conversational lesson on picture, (*b*) reproduction of the simple story, (*c*) original story on picture; and in the upper classes oral compositions should be given regularly. By an oral composition is meant not simply "the questioning-out of a particular subject," but the full expression of their ideas on that subject, from the beginning of it to the end, by the pupils of the class. Such lessons given regularly and consistently will tend largely to increase the pupils' stock of ideas as well as their powers of expression, and will go far to minimise the difficulty experienced by some teachers in obtaining full written essays. The books which are now to be used throughout the district—viz., "Nelson's Illustrated Compositions"—should prove very valuable, and we anticipate that if the lines laid down in them are consistently followed, a great improvement will be made in essay-writing in such schools as have hitherto failed to get good work in that department. On the formal aspect of composition we have little to say this year. In some schools it was evident that while the pupils had been taught to express themselves fully, their written essays had not been sufficiently supervised, and faulty constructions had been allowed to pass. The formal side of composition must have its due place; and although much of what has hitherto been taught under grammar may well be dispensed with, nevertheless all that is required to give a proper understanding of the sentence

and of the relations of words and phrases to one another in the sentence must be retained. A fault in the essays in many schools was the misspelling of common words—words which in the course of a school year are used over and over again. Common articles of furniture and clothing; common objects in and around school or home; days of the week and months of the year—the names of which pupils use almost every day in their speech, and not infrequently in their compositions—should not be misspelt so frequently as they are. It is somewhat absurd that children should be able to spell words which they seldom or never use, and of whose meaning they have but the vaguest idea, and yet be tripped up by simple words of every-day use. A great deal of trouble would be saved if two or three words such as we have mentioned were thrown in with every spelling lesson. In country schools especially, and in all schools more or less, the transcription lesson might frequently be made to aid the work in composition. If, instead of always being asked to transcribe from their books, the pupils were occasionally asked to write simple sentences of their own composing, or if they were asked to embody work in sentences of their own construction, a distinct gain would be made in composition, while at the same time the ends aimed at in transcription would also be secured. "A correct original sentence is worth more from an educational point of view than a page of copied sentences." To sum up, we would emphasize these points: (1) The need of more oral composition in every class; (2) insistence upon accurate sentence-construction; (3) attention to the spelling of words of every-day use; (4) the better employment of some of the time allotted to transcription.

Other Subjects.—Of the remaining subjects, the only ones that call for special comment are geography and history. The teaching of these by many teachers is entirely unsatisfactory. When the new syllabus comes into force, the latter will be simply part of the reading course, and this undoubtedly is the place for it. Lack of intelligence and thoroughness characterized only too much of the geography. In many cases physical geography had received but scant attention; the knowledge possessed of our own land and of our own district was too often of the most meagre description; definitions in Standard II. were memorised without being applied to concrete examples in the district and in the world. The results of our examinations in all standards—especially in Standards V. and VI.—were very disappointing. Drawing, writing, drill, and sewing continue to be well taught. Singing is finding a place in an increasing number of schools. In several of them it is well taught. The teaching of science and of object lessons is becoming more concrete. All teachers who have the opportunity should attend one of the science classes established in our district, and so further equip themselves for doing justice to one of the most important subjects in the curriculum. Not until they know how to conduct experiments themselves can teachers hope for much success with their scholars. It is amazing with what tenacity teachers of the lower classes cling to such subjects for object lessons as leather, glass, glue, &c., and ignore the sun, moon, stars, birds, &c., as being unsuitable for their purpose. We strongly recommend that all old lists of object lessons be burned, and that new ones be prepared embodying the outstanding facts of nature, and the prominent features of animal and plant life seen in the neighbourhood of the school. Here are specimens of the kind of subjects which should appear on every list: "The Sun," "The Moon," "The Sky," "The Clouds," "A Rainy Day," "Spring-time," "Seed-time," "The Wind." At the end of the lesson pupils should be encouraged to give in their own language all the information they can about the subject. In every school where there is a mistress short conversational lessons, lasting for about fifteen minutes, should be given almost every day.

Pupil-teachers.—At the close of the year there were 52 pupil-teachers in the service of the Board, 13 of whom were males and 39 females. At the annual examination, held in June, 12 passed the first class, 11 the second, and 8 the third; 9 failed in all classes, 4 were absent, and 4 were exempted. Of the 12 who passed their last pupil-teachers' examination, 11 have already been appointed to positions as assistants or sole teachers, and, as the demand for teachers still continues, the list of second-class pupil-teachers will have to be drawn upon. We would add a word of encouragement to pupil-teachers one and all, and it is this: Make the best use of all your opportunities, and qualify yourselves in as many ways as you possibly can; in the near future the best positions will open only to those who can show a good all-round equipment, including a high certificate and a sufficient knowledge of some of those extra subjects which are beginning to find their way into our school curriculum.

Candidates for Teaching.—The usual examination of those offering themselves as candidates for the teaching profession was held in December. Fifty-seven in all entered, fourteen of whom were males. Twenty-eight were successful, and of these fourteen have already received appointments. A great many of the candidates were from our district high schools, where they had been studying for one or two years, and had covered a good deal of the work required for their pupil-teacher and higher examinations. Not a few have matriculated. This is just as it should be. The bane of our present pupil-teacher system is that the dual burden of teaching and studying imposes upon the pupil-teacher too heavy a strain, and it is, therefore, impossible for him to do anything like justice to either. The pupil-teacher of the future will have done the whole or a large portion of the study required for his certificate before he begins to teach; so that when he does begin he will be able to throw into it all his energy, and to devote his spare time to general reading and to reading bearing directly upon methods of teaching.

Training College.—Before next year it is likely that a fully equipped training college will have been established at Wellington. The conditions of entry to this will be (1) that the candidate shall have completed a full course as pupil-teacher under a Board, and (2) that he shall have passed the Matriculation Examination of the New Zealand University. The allowances made to those who attend will be the same as are made to fourth-year pupil-teachers, with the addition of fees to those who take University classes. We trust that every pupil-teacher in the service of the Board will make it his aim to get the benefit of at least a year's training at this college. We should like to see our present pupil-teacher system abolished and some such as the following substituted: (1) a

two-years course at a secondary or district high school to enable a candidate for teaching to obtain his full certificate; (2) a two-years course as a pupil-teacher; and (3) a two-years course of training at a training college.

Grants by the Board.—We have to acknowledge our thanks to the Board for the generous manner in which it has responded to various requests that we have from time to time made for grants towards the purchase of material for our schools. All the schools in Grades 1, 2, and 3 have been supplied with crayons, bricks, sticks, and plasticine for the use of the primer classes. It has always been recognised that one of the chief difficulties in schools under one teacher is to find suitable desk employment for the little ones. He should now be able, by means of the apparatus provided, to devise occupations which will profitably engage the attention of the primers while he is busy with the standard classes. A grant was also made towards the purchase of science material, and there is now no excuse for teaching this subject without apparatus. A number of teachers have already procured such apparatus as they require; and we would urge upon all who have not done so to make application without delay.

Winter School.—One of the chief difficulties experienced by teachers far removed from the larger centres is that of keeping in touch with recent developments in school-work. To overcome this difficulty, and following in the lines laid down at the summer school in 1902, we arranged for a winter gathering of teachers. This was held in the week before the midwinter vacation. The programme included practical classes in cardboard-modelling, free-arm drawing, and brushwork for country schools, and lectures on topics of general interest to teachers. The practical classes were undertaken as follows: Cardboard-modelling by Messrs. Banks and Payne; free-arm drawing by Messrs. D. E. Hutton, A.M., and L. M. Watkin; brushwork by Miss E. Hooper. Lectures were delivered by Miss E. Hooper and by Mr. J. A. Johnson, M.A. About three hundred teachers attended, and a praiseworthy spirit of earnestness and enthusiasm was manifest in all the meetings. The teachers of the district high schools held several conferences during the week, and various aspects of the work of these schools were discussed, each discussion being introduced by one or other of the teachers. We propose to hold a similar meeting this year.

Conclusion.—In concluding our report we would express our appreciation of the earnestness and zeal manifested by most of our teachers in the discharge of their duties. We cannot in a report do full justice to the good and faithful service of the average teacher. Too often it would appear that the Inspector is always and at every turn the critic who seeks to find fault. That criticism is part of his mission there is no doubt; but it should be criticism of the kind which seeks to impart to all who have to do with the work of education a spirit of discontent which ever urges us on to achieve better results than we have yet even dreamed of. It is in this spirit that we have sought to expose the weaknesses and failings which belong to the past year's work in the schools of this district; and we trust that in what has been said teachers will find something to stimulate them to go forward with fresh endeavour and unremitting zeal in their work.

We have, &c.,

WM. GRAY, M.A., B.Sc.,
JAS. MILNE, M.A., } Inspectors.

The Chairman, Wanganui Education Board.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,— Wellington, March, 1904.

We have the honour to lay before you our report for 1903 on the primary schools of the Wellington Education District.

The total number of Board schools examined was 151, as compared with 140 in 1902. Two new schools were opened, at Epuni and Marima respectively; four schools—viz., Pencarrow, Whareama, Wharau, and Mangatiti—not in operation in 1902 were reopened during the present year; and new aided schools were established at Admiral Run, Bush Grove, Ngakonui, Ngatahuna, Tikaramonga, and Toro. The Te Aro Infant School (Ghuznee Street), formerly a separate school, was this year incorporated with the main school in Willis Street. In addition to examining all Board schools in operation at the time of our annual visits, seven Roman Catholic schools were examined and reported on, making 158 schools in all, with a total of 16,908 children presented for examination.

The following is a comparison between the figures of 1903 and 1902 for all Board schools in the district: 1903—presented 15,787, present at annual visit 14,723, present in S1 to S6 9,992, passed S1 to S6 8,689; 1902—presented 15,258, present at annual visit 14,063, present in S1 to S6 9,809, passed S1 to S6 8,725: difference—presented 529, present at annual visit 660, present in S1 to S6 183, passed S1 to S6 36 (—).

For the various classes the numbers presented for examination were: 1903—preparatory 4,953, S1 1,781, S2 1,953, S3 1,991, S4 1,816, S5 1,574, S6 1,189, S7 530; 1902—preparatory 4,623, S1 1,832, S2 1,873, S3 1,869, S4 1,850, S5 1,612, S6 1,075, S7 524: difference—preparatory 330, S1 51 (—), S2 80, S3 122, S4 34 (—), S5 38 (—), S6 114, S7 6. The fact that for three years (from 1900 to 1902) the examination roll showed no material increase, makes the increase of 529 a satisfactory one, more especially as the preparatory class shows an increase of 330, whereas last year it showed a decrease on the figures of the previous year of 174. The only classes that show any falling-off in numbers are S1 (51), S4 (34), and S5 (38).

The examination roll does not give the exact figures of the district at any one time, for our annual visits extend during the whole year, but the following figures furnished by the office also show an increase for 1903: 1903—average roll 15,505, average attendance 12,801, percentage 82.6; 1902—average roll 15,254, average attendance 12,580, percentage 82.5: difference—average roll 251, average attendance 221, percentage 0.1. The increase in the roll is satisfactory, but the

other figures are not. In 1902, Wellington's percentage, 82.5, was more than 1 per cent. lower than that of any other district in the colony. Commenting on this in his annual report to Parliament, the Minister of Education says, "It may or may not be a significant fact in this connection that the Wellington District ceased to employ the services of a Truant Officer." In last year's report we drew attention to the low average attendance in our district, and we then expressed a hope that effectual steps would be taken to remedy this. In August last year Truant Officers were appointed at Wellington, Hutt, Otaki, Carterton, Masterton, Eketahuna, and Pahiatua. While their jurisdiction is extensive, the practical result up to the present seems to be limited to the five-mile radius, beyond which they can claim travelling-expenses if their services are required. The Secretary informs us that few applications were made for their services beyond this limit, and although this scheme has been in operation too short a time to form any reliable estimate of the value of the work done, we have not been able to discover that any benefit has accrued to the country schools. Inquiries made by us from some of the headmasters of the larger schools within the five-mile radius have, however, elicited favourable replies. The earnest co-operation of Committees and teachers is the first requisite for the success of any truant scheme. The police, more especially in the larger centres, can also render valuable aid. The position in the Wellington District is now such that the whole truant question requires the serious consideration of the Board, and this is clearly seen when it is remembered that with a roll of 15,505 children, 2,653, or nearly one-fifth, are absent from school every day. This does not take into account many children who, we believe, are not attending school at all. It is true that the December quarterly returns (13,054 average) showed an increase of 375 on those for the preceding quarter (12,679); but the latter figures were the lowest for the whole year. Measles, mumps, scarlet fever, diphtheria, and whooping-cough reduced the average, and it would be somewhat hazardous to ascribe the increase solely to the work of the Truant Officers, for towards the end of the year the epidemics showed signs of abating, and the exceptionally good weather experienced during the last quarter afforded better opportunities for the attendance of children, more especially of those living at a distance from school. This question is so serious that we venture to quote at length from the remarks of one of the Commissioners recently sent by New South Wales to Europe and America to inquire into the existing methods of instruction in education in those continents. Under the head of "School Attendance," Mr. Turner remarks, "There are children in all countries who will not attend school unless under the severest form of compulsion. For these truant schools are necessary. In England every important town has its institution for this class of children, and the general management in all is very similar. . . . For the more incorrigible lad who will not attend the public school there are schools termed 'truant schools.' . . . A lad sent to the truant school remains there for about three months, at the end of which period he is licensed out to attend a Board school on the condition that he attends regularly. Should he fail to fulfil this condition, he is readmitted to the truant school, where he is compelled to spend about four months. At the end of the time he is again licensed out to a Board school on the usual condition, and should he again fail to attend regularly he is sent back to the truant school for a longer period, generally about five months. It will be evident from the practice just described that great care is taken by the authorities to improve the character of the lad. The training consists in the ordinary school subjects in elementary standards, and instruction in technical branches by skilled trade masters." Further on he states, "Compulsory education in its full complete sense must become a live and educative force before the higher developments of public education can be hopefully undertaken. The basic improvements reduced to cardinal issues are as follows: (1) The abolition of a minimum attendance; (2) the provision of adequate means to secure full and regular attendance, and of corrective influences to such an end." Strong differences of opinion exist on the question of truant schools, but the conclusions quoted above are worthy of consideration. It must be remembered that we are not speaking in the interests of those children who have parents capable of appreciating the true value of education, but in the interests of those children whose absence from school makes the returns show that every day nearly one-fifth of the children of the Wellington District are receiving no education whatever.

During the year new schools were erected at Epuni, Muritai, Horoeka, and Hutt. The Petone School was added to and remodelled, and additions were made to Worser Bay and Brooklyn. The central school at Levin was completed to replace the Horowhenua and Levin Schools. A new school has been built to meet the requirements of the Korokoro and Maungarakei Settlements near Petone. It will be opened in March. The school at Whareama was removed to a site more suited to the requirements of the present settlement. We have placed before the Board a detailed report on the necessities of the district with regard to accommodation urgently needed and repairs absolutely necessary. That report shows that schools are required at Akatarawa and Mangarama, additions to Shannon, Kereru, and Tokomaru; Carterton School requires remodelling; and a new school more centrally situated is required at Nireaha. Additions are required at Makuri, and, as the Government has granted £110 for this purpose, the school there will be enlarged. A grant of £300 has been promised for a new school at Kaituna Road, and this will be built when a title has been obtained to the site selected. Separate accommodation is urgently required for the secondary classes at Masterton, and at Wadestown the Board has already purchased a site for a new school. It is also probable that additions will have to be made to the Ihuraua Valley School. At Marima, Makairo, Takapu, Ngahauranga, and Plimmerton there are no Board schools, but buildings are rented for school purposes.

The report above mentioned also gives details of repairs, &c., necessary to put school buildings in an efficient state. Many of our schools have not been painted for years beyond the time it is usually considered necessary to repaint to keep a building in proper repair; the fences and grounds of others require attention; in others, again, the latrine accommodation is inadequate, and some still retain the pit system, which has been severely condemned by the Health Department.

In addition to the requirements of the school buildings proper, many of the teachers' residences are in a most unsatisfactory condition as regards repair. Residences for teachers have to be provided for out of the Board's building grant, and, moreover, the Board has to pay the cost of keeping them in repair. If there is no residence the Department grants a house allowance according to scale. The natural result of this has been that of late years the Board has practically built no residences at all. This is a small matter in the older-settled districts, but it is having a very serious effect on the efficiency of the schools in the back blocks. A house allowance is not of much use to a teacher if he is unable to find any house to rent, and in the bush districts, as a rule, not only are there no houses available, but the greatest difficulty is experienced in procuring even board and lodging. In such circumstances desirable teachers are deterred from applying for vacancies, and the result is that candidates of little experience or standing in the profession are appointed. Mangatiti School was closed for months owing to the difficulty of finding lodgings for the teacher. Horoeka has already been advertised twice within the last few months, and we understand that unless some accommodation can be provided for the present teacher it will have to be advertised again. At Rakanui the teacher and his family are living in what was the only available cottage in the whole district, and that may be sold any day, as the section on which it stands is in the market.

At Kahautara the teacher has to live eight miles away, and a journey of sixteen miles every day must prove detrimental to the work of the school. At Nikau and other places there is the same difficulty. If we are to get our town teachers—especially female teachers—to go into the country, it is absolutely necessary that something better than slab whares or crowded three-room cottages be provided for them in the shape of accommodation.

An application for a school from the Kingston Road settlers was referred to the Department, and a reply was received to the effect that where settlers were situated at no great distance from an established school arrangements should be made to convey the children to that school, in order to prevent the multiplication of small schools. The children at Paremata were formerly conveyed by the Board to the Pahautanui School, but this arrangement seems to have fallen through. An application from Waitohu was recommended to the favourable consideration of the Department for a subsidy for a conveyance. In some of the Eastern States of America, and in Ohio, the central-school system seems to have been a success. This plan has also been adopted lately in Victoria, and in some cases small schools already in operation have been closed, to enable the children to obtain education at a larger and more fully equipped school. This system is also much cheaper for the country. Mr. Turner, one of the New South Wales Commissioners, has considered the whole question very carefully. In his report he says, "On the mere question of cost, the central-school system would prove cheaper than the present arrangement of separate small schools, because the Department would be relieved of the necessity of building and repairing small schools as well as of paying salaries to teachers and providing school material. Even if the scheme cost more, the great benefit conferred upon the children in the matter of providing a higher education would warrant the change." This is true in districts where it would be practicable, but the whole environment of every district must be taken into consideration in dealing with such applications in the future.

The percentage of promotions shows a slight decrease. In all classes for 1903 it fell about 1 per cent. (from 88 to 87), but where there are nearly ten thousand children presented for examination in standards this decrease cannot be taken to indicate any falling-off in efficiency. It is probably due to the advice given by us to teachers not to promote doubtful cases who were irregular in attendance if that irregularity at all interfered with their work in class subjects. We have given full particulars as to the condition and circumstances of each school in our reports submitted to the Board.

We have this year classified the 151 schools examined as—satisfactory 119; fair, 21; and inferior, 11. Grades 1 and 2 contain the larger number of the inferior schools. In most of these changes have been made during the year, and a few are working under very unfavourable conditions. Of the schools classed as satisfactory, many of them show good work in all departments. Most of these are large schools, but many country schools under sole teachers are also doing very good work.

The loss of time through sickness has this year been exceptional. In parts of the district there have been as many as three and four epidemics, necessitating the closing of the schools, in some instances twice during the year. A reference to our reports will, however, show that there has been no falling-off in the efficiency of the schools as a whole. This is not to say that there are not many matters in which an improvement is desirable, but that is only to recognise the fact that we have our proportion of weak teachers as well as of skilful ones; that there are some schools favourably circumstanced, and others, on the other hand, that by reason of unsuitable accommodation, changes in the staff, or sickness and consequent bad attendance are working under disadvantages. Cases of reprehensible neglect, however, are rare, and the rule is to find at least honest and persistent endeavour, though at times there may be lack of satisfactory method.

The general results in English are satisfactory. Spelling is marked good, but the schools in which reading and recitation earn as high commendation are fewer than we hope to see in the future. Mechanical accuracy, and even fluency, may be there, but the true comprehension and interpretation of the thought of the writer are too often wanting. As we pointed out in our last report, the main fault lies in the excessive use of simultaneous reading, but the excuse is very obvious, and as long as teachers are required to push large classes of fifty, and even seventy, children through the same amount of reading-matter in a given time it is, perhaps, unreasonable to expect any great improvement on the present results. When the principles of the new "scientific method" are more fully appreciated and understood we hope to see them applied to the study of English, as well as to science and natural study. Reading and spoken language generally suffer

too from the exaggerated importance attached to spelling. As a rule, more time is given to the spelling of the words in the reading-book than to their correct pronunciation or enunciation, or to meanings and comprehension of subject-matter. Spelling has always been one of the pass subjects for the standards; and, while we fail children who cannot correctly spell words that they will certainly never use in written composition or even in their speech, the proper knowledge and appreciation of the meanings of really necessary words receive nothing like the attention that they require. We are surely making but a feeble effort to counteract the growing tendency towards solecisms and provincialisms when we so often allow children to leave school "clipping" and mispronouncing some of the simplest and commonest words in the language, and yet waste precious hours in drilling them in the correct spelling of words quite outside the vocabulary of every-day life. We are convinced that if more time were given to intelligent and thoughtful reading there would hardly be any necessity for a separate place on the time-table for spelling. Grammar is a subject that for years past has been reported upon as unsatisfactory from one end of the colony to the other, but it is only now that provision has been made for a saner treatment of this subject, and we look forward to greatly improved results in the future, more particularly in its application to composition.

Teachers are readily adopting the suggestion in our last report with regard to the use of suitable poetry books, and the effect on the recitation of many schools is already apparent. We are not altogether in favour of fixing the limit of the number of lines to be learned in any one standard. We would rather that the teacher selected three or four pieces with a view to illustrating different styles and motives of composition, irrespective of quantity. If a teacher selects "How they brought the good news to Aix" as an example of metre and rhythm expressing action and movement, the second piece should be one stimulating the imagination by vivid word-picturing, say, Byron's "Eve of Waterloo," while the third might deal with the emotions, or with the more moral and intellectual aspects of human nature, as, for instance, Wordsworth's "Character of the Happy Warrior," or a selection from Goldsmith's "Traveller," &c. In each case the treatment of the piece selected should be a step towards the study of literature as an art. It appears to us that as far as primary training is concerned the English subjects provide the only means by which an intellectual foundation of some kind can be laid. We have every sympathy with the new method in its desire not only to make the child a thoughtful and scientific observer of the matter and phenomena of nature, but by means of hand and eye training to adapt him to the exigencies of modern industrial and commercial life, but we also desire to see these somewhat materialistic activities under the control of intellectual aspirations and moral ideals. We want our young people to realise that there may be a higher and more important function for language than that of expressing the results of even the most scientific observation and induction—a consideration for which many of the apostles of the new "heuristic method" appear to us to have little regard.

We note an improvement in the writing of a satisfactory proportion of those schools which last year were marked weak in this subject. In others it is still below requirements. We are surprised to have to call the attention of even experienced teachers to improper ways of holding the pen and incorrect position of the child when writing. We must confess, however, that the weak writing in several schools is to some extent due to the overcrowding of the lower standards. A reduction has now been made in the demands for arithmetic as far as the extent of ground to be covered is concerned, and no doubt the new test cards (if the Department continues to issue these) will correspond with that reduction. Our experience is that in many cases the present S5 and S6 cards are too exacting, and, as the spirit of the new syllabus is so much more in the direction of reasonable treatment than of amount of matter, some of the more difficult problems and intricate processes might well be dispensed with. Arithmetic, generally speaking, is a strong subject in our schools, and if there has been too much teaching of examples at the expense of principles, then the tests are to blame. We notice that some of the highest authorities advocate more oral treatment of the subject with exercises in simple mental problems. We entirly agree with them, but unfortunately examination cards have not been at all in that direction. For many years it was customary in this district to give to each standard a certain number of simple problems to be worked "at sight," their value being equivalent to 20 per cent. of the whole arithmetic test for the standard pass. The results were most beneficial, and we very much regret that the practice was ever discontinued.

In political geography the work done in most schools has been satisfactory, but physical has been intelligently taught in only a few. The instructions in the new syllabus are very clear, and we need not repeat them here, except to advise every teacher in drawing up a scheme of work to make such a selection from the programme there set out as will allow of illustration from the geographical features of his own school district. Such a programme will awaken the child's attention to real facts, and will enable his initial conceptions to be rightly formed. His knowledge is first to embrace his own town or district, then his own colony, and next the Empire to which he belongs, and from that his outlook is to be extended to the whole world.

Many schools used reading-books in history, and in others these were combined with oral lessons with generally satisfactory results. In future a course of lessons is to be selected from the programme laid down in the new syllabus, and the object to be kept in view is to train the child thoroughly to understand and appreciate his privileges and duties as a member of the community in which he resides, as a New-Zealander, and as a citizen of the British Empire.

Object lessons on better lines are gradually replacing lessons which gave the child mere information. The same may be said of elementary science. In our district the science subjects from which a selection may be made are chemistry, physics, physiology, botany, agricultural knowledge, and domestic economy. Of these chemistry and physiology are the ones for which teachers show the greatest predilection. In many schools the latter subject was taught on old lines, principally from a text-book, but most teachers are now realising that no science subject can be successfully

taught unless experimental work is resorted to, and the children at the same time take such a part in the work as will enable them to handle, do, think, and find out for themselves in every conceivable way. Each subject is to be treated not as a branch of science, but as a training in scientific method. In some of the larger schools where individual practical work has been done the results have been excellent, but our schools are not yet well-enough equipped to make this subject as satisfactory as it ought to be. We are pleased to notice that some of our teachers in the country are taking up a course of lessons on the simpler facts of such animal and plant life as may be seen in their district, and combining these lessons with a course in handwork, such as cottage-gardening, One note in the new syllabus is worthy of repetition: "Even with careful attention to individual practical work, a course of science for young children will probably fail as an educational instrument if it is too far dissociated from their daily life and experience." It is worth noting here that the successful work done in agriculture by Mr. Davies in the Mauriceville West School has attracted the attention of the Government Biologist, Mr. T. W. Kirk. In the Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture for 1903 (p. 420) photos of the laboratory and school garden are reproduced, with a plan of the garden, and a syllabus of work for two years as set out by Mr. Davies is given. Mr. Kirk remarks, "The teacher, Mr. W. C. Davies, is a thoroughly able enthusiast. Nothing more need be said. The pictures and syllabus speak for themselves. It is to be hoped that the example set by Mr. Davies will be followed in many rural schools." We feel sure that Mr. Kirk will willingly assist those teachers who are following the example of Mauriceville West.

The programme in drawing is not set out on definite lines. The good work done in the past in this district leads us to hope that the standard reached under Mr. Riley's able supervision will be maintained. Handwork is finding more favour with our teachers. Last year seventy schools earned capitation under the Manual and Technical Act, and this year we expect that the number will increase. The subjects taken were modelling, paper-folding, cutting and mounting, mat-weaving, cane-weaving, stick-laying, brick-laying, brushwork, design, free-arm drawing, cottage-gardening, cookery, elementary agriculture, swimming, and sewing. We hope to see some schools earning capitation in physics, chemistry, botany, physiography, first aid and ambulance, and card-board-modelling. The Saturday drawing, technical, and drill classes are being continued as before, and we hope later in the year to establish classes for the teachers in woodwork and cookery. A grant from the Department enabled the Board to fit up cookery rooms in the Newtown and Terrace Schools. These centres are now being used under the temporary charge of Mrs. Neeley, a teacher who holds first-class certificates in artisan and high-class cookery. The Wairarapa classes, which have given such satisfaction to the country people in the past, are being continued by Miss Millington.

In all schools from Grade 1 upwards there were only five schools which did not show any physical drill, and in these cases there was a change in the teaching staff about the time of our annual visit. Poles, clubs, dumb-bells, and Swedish drill are taken, in most cases very satisfactorily. There was a marked improvement in the drill of those schools whose teachers are attending the Saturday class of the Wellington Physical Training School, and we are pleased to see that the Board has decided to continue that class this year. Military drill is taught in all our large schools, and the number of teachers taking up this work is increasing every year. Three battalions have now been formed and gazetted—Wairarapa, Wellington No. 1, and Wellington No. 2. Colonel Loveday has reported very favourably on the work done by the boys in many of our schools. He states, "As a rule I found a general improvement in drill. The position of those holding sergeant's rank is, however, not fully recognised by officers commanding—by this I mean that these non-commissioned officers should have every opportunity afforded them to qualify as such, thus giving the officers commanding every means to rely on their sergeants, who only require encouragement to learn the duties appertaining to their rank. I propose at my next inspection to ascertain what practical knowledge they have of their duties. This question forms the subject of C. O. 27 of the Cadet Orders which were issued to all corps on the 1st February, 1904." All the officers of the various corps do not yet possess uniforms, but at a meeting—held this year—at which Colonel Loveday was present such arrangements were made as will enable all the officers to obtain uniforms, and we expect all our cadet corps to be fully equipped during the year.

One hundred and eighty-seven candidates sat for the Board Scholarship Examination. The examiner, Mr. T. W. Rowe, M.A., in his report says, "I think I may fairly say that the work on the whole was good—some of it very good. It seems to me that the weak point was geography; the work of many candidates in this subject was feeble. In all the other subjects, however, the work was satisfactory, and in some highly so. The better papers in arithmetic were good, though, as a matter of fact, only one candidate obtained full marks. The English, also, was good. Composition, parsing, and analysis were all satisfactory, while most of the candidates had an excellent knowledge of the work (Lamb's 'Tales from Shakespeare') specially studied during the year. The history generally was good, while the science was excellent. The greater number of candidates chose chemistry, physiology, or domestic economy. Of the three subjects, perhaps the papers in physiology were slightly the best. The papers as a whole were exceedingly neat and tidy, and the work generally well arranged." The Board has appointed a committee to consider the whole question of scholarship regulations, so that nothing further need be stated here.

The pupil-teachers were examined by the Department, as was done last year. All but two succeeded in obtaining a higher classification.

District high schools are in operation at Masterton and Pahiatua, and the Board should now take into consideration the question of extending similar benefits to other parts of the district. We sincerely hope that free places in the secondary schools will soon be available for the primary children in Wellington City.

The advent of the new syllabus marks the beginning of a new epoch in the educational life of the colony. Its provisions have been discussed by all branches of the profession, and although, in

some of its details, alterations are thought to be advisable, and even necessary, yet in its comprehensiveness and general tendency it has been welcomed as a most able and scholarly achievement. In nothing more than education can it be at the present time so truly said that "the old order changeth, yielding place to new," and it is in its successful endeavour to meet the requirements of the modern spirit of education that the new syllabus is so distinctly in advance of previous efforts. If it does no more than put an end to the laborious memorising of text-book matter prepared for the sole purpose of examination requirements, it will have done good work. It is in method more than in matter that the greater change has been made, and in our opinion that is the direction in which a change was most urgently needed. At a first glance there would seem to be in some of the schemes of work a suggestion of quantity which is somewhat depressing; but a closer inspection has shown that in every instance quantity is in reality subordinated to quality. But while every scope and encouragement is given to the teacher to show his own power of initiative and individuality in the selection of such programmes of work as he can do justice to, the necessity of his equipping himself to meet modern methods and ideas is made sufficiently obvious. As a matter of fact, in some respects the new syllabus is in advance of the present means of administering its provisions in their true spirit, and its full force will not be felt until regular training colleges are available for our young teachers, and our schools receive more generous treatment in the matters of accommodation, equipment, and staffing. However, these are matters for which provision will, no doubt, be made in the near future. In the meantime, the honest, able, and conscientious work done by our teachers in the past makes us feel that we can confidently rely on their cheerful co-operation in the endeavour to make the new syllabus the success it deserves to be.

We have, &c.,
T. R. Fleming, M.A., LL.B.,
F. H. Bakewell, M.A.,
Inspectors of Schools.

The Chairman, Wellington Education Board.

Summary of Results for the Whole District.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.
				Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	530	519	...	14 3
" VI.	1,189	1,158	946	13 8
" V.	1,574	1,519	1,240	12 11
" IV.	1,816	1,778	1,502	11 11
" III.	1,991	1,935	1,648	10 11
" II.	1,953	1,880	1,705	9 10
" I.	1,781	1,722	1,648	8 8
Preparatory...	4,953	4,212	...	7 0
Totals	15,787	14,723	8,689	11 2*

* Mean of average age.

HAWKE'S BAY.

Sir,— Inspector's Office, Napier, 29th March, 1904.

The seventy-nine schools that were reported by me as being in operation at the date of my general report a year ago, have now increased to eighty-six, with every promise of a further increase during the coming year. This increase in the number of schools does not represent a large increase in the number of pupils for whom accommodation has been provided. Among the seven so-called new schools, Waihora contains four pupils, Pakarae five, Patoka ten, and Mangatoro fifteen. The other three schools—viz., Mangateretere, Hatuma, and Mahora—contain a fairly large attendance, but most of the children have been drawn from the schools immediately surrounding them. Such schools represent the extension of settlement beyond the limits of the larger town centres, and they further represent a new aspect of school expenditure that is becoming necessary wherever special settlements are opened for selection by the Government. Hatuma, Mahora, and Elsthorpe are examples of successful schools in special settlements, but it can hardly be said that the attendance at Mangatoro has justified the expenditure of so much money on the erection of buildings. The selectors in the special settlements known as the "Willows," in Poverty Bay, and Argyle, between Waipawa and Hampden, are applying for the erection of a school, but it appears to me that the interests of each district would be better met for a year or so by provision being made for a coach to carry the children to and from the nearest public school.

Last year attention was drawn to the need of painting and otherwise improving the interior of the school buildings in the majority of school districts. Many years have passed since the rooms

were painted or in any way improved, and they now present a dullness and heaviness that ought not to exist in rooms where children assemble for instruction and training. Good environment is of great importance in the early associations of children, and it is again urged that the improvements recommended by me some time since be carried out so soon as funds are available. In some schools the desks are very old and worn, and worm-eaten. These should be renewed; but whenever the change is made the dual desk would replace the type of school desk now in use.

In most of the districts where schools have been erected the accommodation is sufficient for present wants. The marked falling-off in the attendance at schools like Napier (Main), Clive, Taradale, and Port Ahuriri, compared with the attendance of a few years ago, leaves these schools with an excess of accommodation, but generally the school provision is just sufficient for present requirements. Dannevirke South, Kiritaki, Mahora, and Mangapapa, a suburb of Gisborne, are perhaps the only places where extension of the present buildings is required; but there are still sixteen schools under the Board that are carried on either in hired buildings or in rooms that are provided rent-free by the settlers. In the majority of the sixteen districts the attendance is too small for the expectation that school provision will be made by the Board, but this does not apply to Port Awanui, Tokomaru, Mohaka, and Ngapaeruru, where the school attendance is such as to call for separate consideration, as each district named has suffered serious educational disabilities for years past.

Some difficulty is being experienced with the newly constituted Board of Health in consequence of defective latrines and drainage at some of the schools. It would save a good deal of expense and trouble if some arrangement were made between the Board's architect and the Health Officer as to the best and most economical means of providing latrines, drainage, and a good water-supply to the several schools under the Board. At most of the schools earth-closets are in use, but the drainage from the urinals is at times very bad, for the reason that little or no attention is paid to school hygiene in the construction and arrangement of school buildings.

Many improvements are noticeable in the school grounds. Committees that make an attempt to plant ornamental trees and shrubs for the beautifying of the school-surroundings and the enjoyment of the children are doing much good for the respective districts. At Woodville specimens of all the more important deciduous forest trees from the Home-land have been planted, and the example set has been followed in many other districts within the limits of the Seventy-mile Bush.

School gardens continue to flourish, and instruction is given by the teachers in three schools in gardening and elementary agriculture. Ormond, Matawhero, and Patutahi still hold the premier positions, the former for its well-kept gardens, and the latter for the best-arranged school grounds, but there are quite a number of other schools where teachers and children are interesting themselves in flower and vegetable gardens. If the Board offered a banner for competition among the schools of the district for the best-kept school gardens and ground, it would foster this aspect of school training and directly benefit "nature study" in the schools.

The establishment of a district high school at Dannevirke and Woodville respectively has supplied a great educational gap in the southern portion of the district, and there is every promise that both schools will be successful. The attendance at Dannevirke requires already the services of two teachers of secondary subjects, and the numbers will show a further increase as soon as proper school accommodation has been supplied. Both at Dannevirke and Woodville a separate building for secondary pupils is badly needed.

The application for a district high school at Hastings, although approved by the Board, has not yet been sanctioned by the Minister of Education under section 55 of the Education Act.

The district high school at Gisborne continues to be carried on with much success. The rooms now in course of construction for secondary and technical work will provide a long-felt want. This school was thrown open free to all pupils passing the Sixth Standard, more than two years before the Government brought in the regulation for free instruction in district high schools; but, curiously, little or no advantage has been taken of the privilege by parents on behalf of their children. The flourishing state of the district is calling into requisition the services of all Sixth Standard pupils, and this may account for the slow increase in the attendance in the secondary department at the Gisborne School.

The summary of promotion results that is given below gives 114 pupils in Standard VII. class in all the schools of the district. Omitting the district high schools, there were fifteen others where Standard VII. pupils were under instruction. All pupils who pass the Sixth Standard may attend a district high school free. Curiously, this rule does not obtain in the case of a high school. Hence pupils who pass the Sixth Standard in Napier, or within travelling-distance of it, are debarred from attending as free pupils at the Napier High School if more than fourteen years of age, but the same pupils would be admitted to a district high school if one were available. The outcome of this inequality of treatment is to be seen at the Napier Main School, where a special class for Standard VII. pupils is carried on, without any compensating advantage to the school, although secondary or district high school work is being done. It seems but reasonable that either the Napier Main School should be constituted a district high school for the benefit of children in the district who have passed the Sixth Standard and are over the age limit, or the same advantage should be given to pupils to attend a high school as is given to attend a district high school.

But, useful as district high schools are, they do not meet the educational wants of country districts. The majority of teachers are now able to carry on the instruction of pupils beyond the elementary stage. Such knowledge as they have is in a measure lying idle. A great gap would be filled if schools classed as "efficient" in essential subjects were permitted, on the recommendation of the Inspector, to take such higher subjects of instruction as would meet the local demands of a district, payment being made to teachers for Standard VII. pupils at the same rate as is now the case with district high schools.

The following tabulation contains the number of children in the schools of the district who were returned as attending school during the progress of my examinations. The old plan of recording progress is continued for the purpose of comparison, although "passes" under the present regulations is to be interpreted as meaning "promotions" from a lower to a higher class, as estimated by the tests of each principal teacher. Standards VI. and VII. are the only classes where promotions are made by an Inspector.

Classes.	Number on Roll.		Present at Annual Visit.		Absent.		Failed.		Passed.		Percentage of Passes in		Average Ages of Pupils in each Class.			
	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.	1903.		1902.	
													Yrs.	mos.	Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII.	114	111	106	96	8	15	...	...	...	...	...	...	14	5	14	7
" VI.	557	503	541	493	16	10	167	192	374	301	69·1	61·0	14	1	14	0
" V.	759	772	739	757	20	15	167	152	572	605	77·0	79·9	13	2	13	0
" IV.	1,045	928	1,015	901	30	27	192	150	823	751	81·0	83·3	12	3	12	1
" III.	1,030	1,145	1,002	1,109	28	36	188	156	814	953	81·2	85·9	11	1	10	10
" II.	1,119	1,024	1,084	987	35	37	149	104	935	883	86·2	89·4	9	11	9	9
" I.	1,069	1,075	1,008	1,044	61	31	121	91	887	953	88·0	91·2	8	9	8	7
Preparatory	2,682	2,672	2,254	2,364	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7	7	...	
	8,375	8,230	7,749	7,751	198	171	984	845	4,405	4,446	80·1	84·0	11	5*	11	10*

* Mean of average age.

In the six Catholic schools in the district that were examined there were 746 on the roll, 701 present at the time of the Inspector's visit, and 329 who passed in standard classes. The numbers for the year were 781, 526, and 356 respectively.

The above tabulation shows that the total number of pupils on the school rolls at the time of my annual visit was 8,375, or 145 more than were present in the previous year, but only 7,749 were present at the examination. This is two below the number that were present in 1902, when there were seven fewer schools in operation. Forms of sickness peculiar to children appeared in a number of districts, notably in Poverty Bay, where many pupils were absent from examination owing to this cause. Some complaints were made to me at the time of my annual visit about the irregularity of the senior pupils, who are kept at home in far too many instances to run messages or perform domestic duties that could be easily done before school-time by the exercise of a little foresight on the part of parents. The worst cases of irregularity are met with at Taradale and Wairoa, whilst Papakura and Patutahi represent schools of unusual regularity, there being a difference of nearly 20 per cent. in the regularity of children in these two widely different types of schools.

The examinations for promotion were conducted as in previous years. Teachers realise the importance of testing the work of their pupils in anticipation of the annual visit from the Inspector, but one finds a growing anxiety among many teachers at the risks they run at the instance of parents should it be found necessary to keep back several unprepared children. Over-anxiety of parents is a growing danger to thoroughness in the efficiency of the schools, as the idea is abroad that the secondary school and not the primary school is of chief importance in the training of children. No greater error could be made, for it is the primary school that must ever make or mar a people and a nation. The foundation of all knowledge is based on right concepts in the early training of children, and it is in the primary school where these should be obtained. The teachers in their examinations aim to do the work as set forth in the regulations, and it must be said, to their credit, that I have seldom had occasion to differ from them in the classification of their pupils. Some of the teachers, indeed, are men capable of being intrusted with the highest duties of school training, and their work would be just as well done were examinations and inspections to cease altogether. But as yet such teachers are the exception rather than the rule. "Teachers," says a great writer on education, "are a very artistic product. They do not grow like mustard and cress in a bottle by just sprinkling a few 'minutes of council,' by authority over the land. A teacher is a combination of heart, head, artistic training, and favouring circumstances. Like all other high arts, life must have free play in the exercise of teaching or teaching cannot be. Unfortunately, the feeling abroad is that examinations, and an abundance of them, are necessary in order to measure progress. But education and training are not to be measured like yards of tape; and yet there are many parents who think that the only test of a teacher's qualifications is the number of passes he can make in an examination. The term "pass" is, however, capable of wide interpretation; but a teacher is "an artificer of mind and noble life," and these products an examiner cannot test by ordinary methods.

The great defects most common in the schools to-day arise from what must be set down to the desire to compass too many subjects within the short school life of the children. It is to be regretted that better means are not taken to discover the actual length of schooling of all the children that attend school. Considering how brief the school period is, thoroughness in the preparation of essential subjects is barely possible when so much other preparation has to be done. Much weakness is to be found in the school-work of to-day. Variety of subjects may be useful, but it gives rise to superficiality in what was formerly considered the highest form of school preparation. The abolition of the "pass," and the freedom given to the teachers to classify their

own pupils, may be, and no doubt is, right in principle, but when one remembers how many of the teachers have been moulded in routine there is little wonder if methods of instruction are defective. One might linger over this aspect of school-work and point out defects in the preparation of all the class subjects, but it may be better to direct attention to what are perhaps the two most important subjects in the school course, and which, nevertheless, are, on the whole, the worst-taught in the schools. I refer to reading and arithmetic. In the larger schools these subjects are not as well taught as in the smaller schools. The absence of unity of plan and of scientific methods of instruction in the larger schools accounts for a good deal, but sufficient attention is not given to the study of subjects in relation to the children themselves. Too many teachers forget that they have to deal with children, and that to get at their minds they must try to become what they once were themselves. The successful teacher steps down, as it were, into the children's world, and presents his thoughts for acceptance in language such as the children understand. He infuses his spirit of work and of duty into his pupils, and they come to see and to appreciate new truths and new ideals in everything they do. The reading and arithmetic lessons, when properly given, can be made the chief instruments of training in schools when prepared and taught by a skilful teacher. Possibly the most potent of all subjects of instruction is the reading lesson, and yet how mechanical it becomes in the hands of many teachers! Good and intelligent reading is the rarest thing in the schools to-day. The lesson is a hurry. It is the mastery of words without thought, without intelligent appreciation of the beauties contained in words that are passed by as if time itself were too valuable to linger over the subject-matter of a lesson. Imperfect modulation, bad enunciation, and bad emphasis are far too common in the schools, and the defects are allowed to grow till they pass current in the daily converse of children. Much more critical preparation is wanted on the part of teachers, and less hurry—no matter whether the requirements can be compassed in a year, or two, or three; and pupil-teachers must not be intrusted with the principal part of instruction in this subject. When a good lesson is given one loves to linger, as do the pupils themselves, and listen to the teacher who can appreciate more than the mere words in the language of a writer, and who can show how meaning can be expressed by proper stress and phrasing. Thring says, "The value of good reading has never been recognised. Good reading is the first training of the beginner, the last crowning excellence and consummate perfection of the finished master, of all perfected culture. All skill of heart, of head, of lips is summed up in the charmed sound of noble utterance falling with thrilling melody on the souls of those over whom a great reader casts his spell. Reading, again, is the sole giver of words and teacher of word-meaning. . . . The teacher will read and teach his pupils to read. He will rouse the love of thought, inspirit the courage, quicken the energy, feed the curiosity, and call out the endurance of the young traveller on the threshold of a new world. Mind is his subject, thought the work to be done."

The processes in arithmetic are often seriously defective. Mere mechanical routine is followed, and the easiest problem becomes a veritable *pons asinorum* to many pupils. The fault rests solely with teachers and their methods of training. They fail in making children realise that in a problem, as in an ordinary mechanical test, something is known and something is unknown, the former being the statement or thing told, the latter a question or thing wanted. The absence of unity of plan in the larger schools, where a strong teacher is sometimes found in one class and a mere routine worker in another, accounts for the weaknesses that so often are to be found in this subject. Dovetailing is the thing wanted, and head masters should arrange the plan of working for the whole school and insist that the spoon-feeding process of instruction shall cease. The smaller schools produce better results in arithmetic than the larger ones, because self-reliance is more fostered in the former and the methods of instruction are more continuous and systematic.

The establishment of a scheme of national scholarships by the Government and the opening of high schools to pupils passing Standard VI. are events worthy of record in connection with the educational work of the past year. It is a pity, as it appears to me, that the examination for National Scholarships should be based upon Standard V. requirements, considering that Standard VI. pupils may compete in the examination. Neither should an age clause limit those of "school age" under the Education Act who should compete for the coveted prizes offered. An allowance of 2 or 3 per cent. of marks for each year a competitor is under the age of fifteen years would meet all difficulties, and would provide a chance to all pupils passing Standard VI. within the "school age." The granting, also, of school scholarships to pupils might easily be managed under the "national scheme," the scholarships being determined by the position of candidates on the result list, just as is proposed for the granting of the Victoria Scholarships. The increase of examinations is disastrous to true educational training, and, whilst hailing the National Scholarship scheme of the Government, I venture to think there is need for simplification in the methods of granting scholarships that are now offered for competition by the Government and the Education Board.

In anticipation of changes in the standard syllabus, much attention has been given to the fostering of classes for the training of teachers in subjects of instruction that will be required under the amended syllabus. Drawing and woodwork have been successfully taught in Napier and Dannevirke in the special classes for teachers. Unfortunately the heavy expense connected with similar classes in Gisborne for the benefit of teachers in Poverty Bay made it impossible to continue them throughout the year, but it is hoped that arrangements will be made to reopen the classes when the Technical School now being built in Gisborne is ready for occupation.

Special classes for technical instruction under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act were carried on in Napier during the winter months with considerable success, but the accommodation is far from satisfactory. The plumbing class is taken in a separate building from that temporarily used as a technical school. The rooms used for instruction in woodwork and in decoration are quite unsuitable, and it is hoped that a new technical school will be provided by the Government to meet the growing needs of Napier and district.

The special classes for teachers that were opened in Napier during the midwinter holidays brought together all those that had been unable to avail themselves of the Saturday classes in consequence of their living so far from Napier or Dannevirke. The course of instruction included drawing, plasticine work, singing, lectures, and criticism lessons, but the opportunities for visiting the Napier Main School, the Training School, and the Hastings School were not the least important among the educational advantages open to the visiting teachers during their three weeks' teaching under my own immediate supervision.

As the staffing of the schools under the Public-school Teachers' Salaries Act is now in full operation, it appears as if the old pupil-teacher system that has done duty so long is about to pass away. I do not think it will cause many regrets. The system was begun in New Zealand in imitation of the English plan, but the school system of this country was very different from that adopted in England in the earlier years of educational development. No such system is known in Germany or the United States, where education has reached a high standard of efficiency. The employment of young persons as teachers without preparatory training is certainly not beneficial to the progress of education. Fortunately, the number of pupil-teachers in the service of the Board has diminished largely during the past two years, and I doubt whether the continuance of the annual examination for pupil-teachers is now necessary, as under the teachers' salaries scale the purpose for which the examination was held has become obsolete.

The closing of the Training School in Napier is a serious blow to this district. During the time the school was in operation much real good was done in the training of young teachers, and country districts are now reaping the benefit of such training. It is proposed to start four training colleges—one in each place where there is a University college. The academic preparation of young teachers will no doubt be fostered by this plan, but the want of to-day is skilful teachers in the public schools. Practical training is essential, and it is for this reason that I regret the closing of the Training School. A little generous treatment would have placed the school on a good footing, and it could have been worked for the special benefit of the district in connection with one of the University colleges, to which young teachers in training could have been sent for the completion of their academic course.

The Catholic schools that have been examined by me for some years past have received notice of my inability to examine them another year. The increase in the number of Board schools and the establishment of district high schools have thrown upon me a large amount of additional work, and time cannot be spared for the examination of outside schools. I trust, however, that some plan may be possible whereby the examination of Catholic schools can be continued. I am convinced that the schools have benefited even by the small assistance one has been able to render. Two of the schools are well taught and the others are making earnest efforts to attain a satisfactory standard.

As bearing on the school life of the children, a very interesting experiment has recently been carried out at the Napier Main School and the Gisborne District High School in part. On the invitation of the Committee, Mr. Azzopardi, optician, conducted a series of experiments in sight-testing among the senior pupils of these schools, and in a memorandum he suggests that arrangements should be made for the systematic testing of all the school-children in the district. Several cases of monocular vision were discovered, and he remarks that "defects of vision are just as apt as are defects of hearing to give rise to an apparent stupidity in young children, but while the existence of the latter can be tested by the simplest observation the degree of a defect in sense-perception of the former type is only to be determined by a technically educated optician." The tabulation embodying the results of his inquiries is full of interest, and shows that astigmatism and short sight exist among a fairly large proportion of the pupils. Similar tests for other schools would prove of much value if they could be carried out.

In concluding this report I desire to say that for diligence, for attention to duty, and for earnestness of purpose the teachers in the Board's service deserve every commendation. Their daily round of routine and their wish to prepare the full requirements of the syllabus often lead them astray, but as a whole good and effective service is being rendered. On behalf of several of the older teachers a separate word of sympathy is required. If a superannuation scheme were in operation I would gladly recommend their retirement and pension. They have served the country faithfully for many years, and have done yeoman service at a time when teachers were difficult to obtain. Perhaps a recommendation from the Board to the Government in support of a superannuation scheme for teachers would be of some service. Certainly it would be appreciated by teachers, and it would show them that the Board is not unmindful of the interests of those who have grown old in its service. Some of the teachers will find a difficulty in meeting the demands under the new syllabus regulations, and something must needs be done if the new conditions are to operate in all the Board schools.

I have, &c.,
H. Hill, Inspector.

The Chairman, Hawke's Bay Education Board.

MARLBOROUGH.

Sir,— Blenheim, 2nd January, 1904.

I have the honour to present my thirteenth annual report on the condition of the primary education in the schools under the control of your Board.

The number of schools that have been in operation during the whole or some portion of the year 1903 is sixty. Four schools that were open during the year 1902 have been permanently closed—viz., Birch Hill, Laverique Bay, Saratoga Bay, and Whatamonga. Four others were

temporarily closed at the time of the annual visit—viz., Beatrix Bay, Cape Campbell, Crail Bay, and Te Puru; and one (Waikawa Bay) was not visited on account of the tempestuous weather on the day appointed for voyaging to that place. The report therefore refers to the remaining fifty-five schools. Three private schools were also examined.

The roll number of the public schools in the district at the end of the September quarter was 1,992, and the aggregate roll number of the schools that were examined was 1,970 at the time of the annual visits. Of these 1,925 were present, and 1,270 passed the examinations in Standards I. to VI. The number passed represents 64.4 per cent. of the total roll number, and 91.7 per cent. of the number actually examined. This shows an increase of 4 per cent on the roll number, and about 3 per cent. on the number examined, as compared with the results of 1902. These figures compare favourably with the average results for the whole colony, as given in the Minister's twenty-sixth annual report, which shows that 54.5 per cent. of the roll number and 86.1 per cent. of the number examined passed the several standards.

The average ages of the scholars in the several standard classes, when compared with the same for 1902, show for Standard VI. the same, 14 years 2 months; for Standard V., 13 years 2 months, or one month younger; for Standard IV., 12 years, or one month older; for Standard III., 10 years 11 months, or the same as last year; for Standard II., 9 years 7 months, or one month older; for Standard I., 8 years 7 months, or one month younger; and for Class P, 6 years 8 months, or four months younger. The mean average age for the district has fallen from 11 years 7 months in 1899 to 11 years 3 months in 1903.

The summary of results for the whole district will be found in the appendix to this report.

Quality of the "Passes."—In pursuance of the plan adopted at the last examination, I have again classified the passes obtained in Standards III., IV., V., and VI. in schools above Grade 0 as "strong," "fair," or "weak." The average percentages of these passes were—strong, 40.2 per cent.; fair, 39.5 per cent.; and weak, 20.2 per cent.: showing a decrease of 10 per cent. in the strong passes, an increase of 5.5 per cent. in the fair, and an increase of 4 per cent. in the weak passes. This result is very much what might have been expected, and had the late regulations remained in force for a few years longer the "strong" passes would probably have gradually disappeared, as the effect of the absurd leniency of the conditions for passing would have been constantly accumulating. The new regulations, however, will prevent (or disguise) this deterioration by almost entirely abolishing the "pass" system.

Speaking generally as to the condition of your schools, I am confident that the majority of them are doing all that can reasonably be expected when all unfavourable circumstances are taken into consideration.

This year sickness has been more than usually prevalent. At one school the attendance fell below one-half the roll number on 119 half-days out of the 431 comprising the school year, and others have suffered in the same manner, although not showing so many "excepted" half-days.

I will now make a few remarks upon the treatment of some subjects of the syllabus in the schools of the district.

Reading.—The importance of this subject, though undoubtedly very great, is, in my opinion, considerably exaggerated when failure in reading alone is made a bar to promotion; although it requires failure in three other subjects to produce the same effect. A child may fail, say, in spelling and composition, or in composition or arithmetic, and yet must be promoted to a higher standard; but failure in reading is fatal. No doubt this fact is steadily impressed upon the minds of the scholars throughout the year, with the result that in the case of nervous or timid children (and these are very numerous) failure is a foregone conclusion, unless the judgment of the examiner is largely tempered with mercy. I, therefore, do not regard a slight hesitation at a long word, or the occasional omission of a small one, as a ground of condemnation. The chief faults in this district arise from the common idea amongst most children, and perhaps some teachers, that fast reading is good reading; whereas, as a rule, the very opposite is the case. On the whole, the reading, gauged by the amount of intelligent expression, distinct enunciation, and moderate fluency, seems to me to be quite as good as can be expected, considering the small amount of time that it is possible to devote to this one out of the fifteen subjects that have to receive some amount of attention in the twenty-five hours of the school week. As I remarked last year, I do not think that sufficient use is always made of the second reading-book supplied some years since to all the chief schools. Henceforth, however, two books at least must be used in the schools, either one of which may be chosen by the examiner at the annual visit. After all, reading aloud, after school is over, is nowadays almost entirely confined to the occupants of the reading-desks in the churches, and whatever lack of expression may be noticeable there cannot yet be attributed to defective teaching in our primary schools.

Writing.—As far as the production of easily legible, clean, and sightly copy-book writing is concerned, this subject is fairly well taught in most schools, and specially so in a few, in which good writing seems to have become almost a tradition. There is, however, far from sufficient attention paid throughout the district to the proper manner of holding the pen, and the written work of the upper standards, at the examination, falls very far short, as a rule, of the quality displayed in the copy-books. This is easily accounted for. The written work of the examination is necessarily somewhat hurried, while the copy-book work may be, and in many cases undoubtedly is, performed at the slowest possible rate. The number of lines contained in a Standard IV. copy-book is seventy-two, and in many schools certainly not more than four books are filled during the year. Assuming the number of school days in the year to be 400 and that copy-book writing is practised only twice in a week, the average lesson would consist of 1.8 lines for half an hour's work. Seeing that in business affairs rapidity is (next to legibility) the most desirable characteristic of handwriting, it is questionable whether such extreme deliberation is conducive to success in this department of primary education. This year I judged the writing of some of the larger schools by a special test, in the shape of transcription from the reading-books, and was quite satisfied, on

the whole, with the result. I have before recommended the practice of affixing the date at the end of every writing lesson, and I again urge the adoption of this, which is itself a useful habit for children to acquire, and would show at a glance the amount of each day's work.

Composition.—This subject shows signs of improvement, which would be more general if greater attention was paid to what is now generally called "oral" composition. The importance of this as an aid to the teaching of the subject is rightly emphasized by nearly all modern educational authorities, and it is, indeed, the natural method. The strongest proof of its value is to be found in the fact that children whose social surroundings are such as to familiarise them with the conversation and letters of well-educated persons require far less instruction, and benefit far more by it, than those less fortunately situated. These last, indeed, are constantly receiving at home and in the streets lessons in oral composition which they too readily assimilate, and the unlearning of which is one of the chief hindrances to even moderate proficiency in this important department of primary education. A few generations back the formal teaching of (English) composition was almost unknown, the art being acquired naturally and unconsciously through constant intercourse with well-educated persons and through some acquaintance with the works of the best authors of the day—before the advent of the sensational novelist. The composition of Standard V., which was generally tested, as prescribed in the syllabus, by the rendering of passages of poetry in the reading-book into prose, was, on the whole, rather disappointing, and would seem to indicate that this plan of supplying the scholars with material for exercises in composition had been to some extent neglected. Certainly some of the poetry in this book is not very suitable for the purpose, and any one who would compile a volume consisting of numerous examples of simple poems, and extracts from poems, suitable for Fifth Standard composition exercises would confer a boon on teachers generally. On the whole, the subject is fairly well taught throughout the district. The average percentage of passes in this subject was 83.3, and of the twenty-five largest schools seventeen were above and eight below the average, while several of the smaller schools passed all that were presented.

Arithmetic.—This permanent puzzle of the standard examinations is as inexplicable as ever. Notwithstanding that probably one-fifth of the whole school year is devoted to the subject, and that the tests now supplied by the Department certainly do not, as a rule, err in the direction of undue difficulty, the amazing fact is once more evident that the results of all this teaching, so far as can be ascertained at the annual examination, are by far the lowest amongst the "pass" subjects, certainly in Marlborough, and probably in most other districts. Taking the five pass subjects of Standards III., IV., and V., and the same subjects of Standard VI., I find that, while 97.6 per cent. passed in reading, 70.2 per cent. in spelling, 95.4 in writing, and 83.3 in composition, only 49 per cent. passed in arithmetic. Ten very small schools (presenting from one to five scholars in these standards) failed to pass a single scholar in arithmetic.

Class Subjects.—The class subjects, on the average, were fairly well treated. Taken all together, 4 per cent. were marked good; 28 per cent., satisfactory; 35 per cent., fair; and 33 per cent., moderate.

Taken separately, grammar was the least satisfactory (although several schools showed marked improvement on last year's work), and in twenty-four schools is described as "Inferior."

History is very little better; in fact, history "as she is taught" (or, at all events, learned) in this district is of absolutely no value whatever, educative or otherwise, but the cause of a lamentable waste of valuable time. The most hopeless confusion of events and persons prevails.

Elementary science and object lessons remain much the same as in past years, nor can any great improvement be expected until the chief schools are provided with some amount of scientific apparatus. As regards the teaching of science, I have repeatedly remarked on its comparative worthlessness when unaccompanied by actual experiment, and nothing but the want of the necessary apparatus prevents many of your teachers from producing results equal to those in any similar schools in other districts. To provide suitable appliances for this purpose for the larger schools only would involve an expenditure which is far beyond the ordinary means of the Board.

This year several teachers, with my approval, substituted the study of "Nature in New Zealand," and the time thus occupied will certainly have been more profitably employed than if it had been spent by the scholars in more or less unsuccessful attempts to store in their memories bare statements of scientific facts, learned by rote, and without any experimental confirmation.

Singing is taught in ten schools, and of these one was marked excellent; three, good; one, satisfactory; and five, fair. In the Blenheim Boys' and the Renwick Schools a fair acquaintance with the theory of music was exhibited.

Modelling and plasticine has made considerable progress, and was particularly well presented at the Blenheim Junior Division, and at Grovetown, Havelock Suburban, Marshlands, Renwick, and Spring Creek.

Physical drill, to meet the requirements of the Act, is practised for a few minutes morning and afternoon at all but the very smallest schools, and in the larger a certain amount of military drill is also undertaken, while at some the girls have wand and dumb-bell drill.

General Supervision.—An indication of the amount of real lively interest the teacher takes in the welfare of his scholars, apart from the actual work of teaching, may usually be found in the appearance of the school grounds and premises. In some cases there is ample evidence that playground-supervision, although "provided for," is very imperfectly performed. The mere presence of one of the teachers in some part of the premises is not all that is required, and the large amount of wilful damage to the Board's property outside, and even to the furniture within, points unmistakably to reprehensive neglect of this part of the teachers' duties. Another unsatisfactory feature is the untidiness of some of the playgrounds, frequently caused by the accumulation of old lunch-papers, which, carelessly thrown down, are blown backwards and forwards by the winds. This last complaint may appear trivial to some, but nothing is trivial that in any way serves to encourage, both by precept and practice, a regard for cleanliness and tidiness amongst the

scholars. In pleasing contrast to this, I notice that at several schools the girls have made praiseworthy attempts to cultivate small gardens, and this, while providing a rational and healthy pastime, also adds much to the appearance of the grounds, and tends at the same time toward the promotion of that regard for neatness and tidiness so often conspicuous by its absence.

Private Schools.—The schools supported by the Roman Catholics of Blenheim were examined by me as usual, under the same conditions as the public schools, and with very creditable results. Though the general percentage of passes is somewhat lower than the average of all the public schools, yet these schools held a good position as regards the "pass" subjects, being a little above the average in reading, spelling, and composition, and a little below in writing and arithmetic. Moreover, the average ages of all standards, except Standard II., were considerably below those of the same standards in the public schools.

M.H.R. Medals.—For the first time since their establishment, these medals were gained by pupils attending St. Joseph's Girls' School and St. Mary's Boys'. The two next highest were both scholars at the Renwick School.

Scholarships.—The examination of candidates for the Board's scholarships was held on Tuesday, the 22nd of December, 1903. Twenty-two candidates were examined. Ten of these gained the proportion of marks required to qualify them to take scholarships (60 per cent. or upwards). Seven of the candidates are entered for the National Scholarships, and two of these (the third and fourth on the list) are entitled to Town Scholarships. The work of the ten candidates who qualified was, on the whole, very good in all subjects excepting arithmetic, which was somewhat inferior in several cases. There was a considerable falling-off in regard to the neatness of the papers, especially so in those on arithmetic, many of which were disgraceful as regards the formation of the figures and the slovenly arrangement of the work, and added considerably to the trouble of the examiner in finding out the answers. The last five or six candidates on the list ought not to have been nominated at all. The examination for the newly established National Scholarships took place on the 5th and 6th of January, and seventeen candidates presented themselves in this district, besides three who competed for the "free places" given in conjunction with the scholarships.

I have, &c.,

JOHN SMITH, Inspector.

The Chairman, Marlborough Education Board.

APPENDIX.—SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.
				Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	45	39	...	15 1
" VI.	164	163	131	14 2
" V.	242	233	207	13 2
" IV.	237	231	212	12 0
" III.	239	238	218	10 11
" II.	267	262	252	9 7
" I.	261	258	250	8 7
Preparatory...	515	501	...	6 8
Totals	1,970	1,925	1,270	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

NELSON.

SIR,— Nelson, 26th January, 1904.

We have the honour to submit the following report on the schools of the Nelson Education District for the year 1903.

One hundred and nineteen schools were at work during the last quarter of the year. Six small household schools—Awaroa, Baton, Lighthouse, Maruia, Cable Bay, and Warwick Junction—have been closed since last examination. Brook Street, Hampden Street, and Matiri have been reduced to the rank of side schools. New schools have been opened at Blackwater, Owen Junction, McWha's, and Oparara. As there were 124 schools open at the end of 1902, the number has nominally fallen by five, but really by two, for the others, as above shown, still operate as side schools. During the year a side school to Progress has been opened at Globe Hill. Great difficulty was experienced in getting capable teachers for some of the small schools, which consequently were closed for several months of the year. Owing to this cause the children at Doctor's Creek, Inangahua Landing, Wangapeka, Glenroy, and Sherry were not prepared for examination this year, and the prevalence of epidemics at the time of the Inspector's annual visit prevented Little

Wanganui and Pokororo from being examined. Two new schools, Owen Junction and McWha's, had been opened such a short time that in their case it was deemed inadvisable to hold our examination. Consequently the list of public schools examined by us this year is reduced to 110. It is worthy of note that the amalgamation of the Nelson City schools cannot continue unless in each group an average attendance of 201 is maintained.

Six schools not under the supervision of the Board have also been examined, as well as the junior forms of Nelson College and Nelson Girls' College. The total number concerned in these schools was 395, of whom 380 were present at examination and 220 passed. One hundred and seven public schools, the highest number yet recorded, were also inspected during the year.

The average weekly number on the rolls for the September quarter was 5,590, or seventy-eight lower than for the corresponding quarter of last year. The closing of so many schools, in some cases for more than a quarter, has reduced the total roll this year, and the average attendance has suffered severely from the prevalence of epidemics. Scarlatina, measles, whooping-cough, chicken-pox, and mumps have each and all had their turn, and in some ill-fated school districts we found the whole five prevailing at the same time

The number on the rolls when we examined amounted to 5,581, as compared with 5,698 of the previous year. The deficiency was most evident in the Nelson City schools, but there was marked increase at Westport, Millerton, and Coal Creek. Some loss in numbers has been experienced by the draft of free pupils (forty-seven) from the Seventh Standard to the colleges. We find that in Nelson and the Waimeas fifty-eight are eligible this year, and probably about forty will avail themselves of the privilege. In Nelson City the Seventh Standard class has almost entirely disappeared, and our whole roll for the district shows only 157, compared with 215 last year; but we notice that the proposed new syllabus, by providing a separate course of work for this standard, will in future encourage the pupils, especially in country districts, to remain longer at school.

The average attendance for the year has been only 4,593. This is 216 lower than last year, and gives an average of but 82 per cent. Irregular attendance, accentuated by the troubles already enumerated, has been more than ever in evidence. The question of bad attendance is a difficult one to deal with. Some of the worst schools might be closed as a punishment to the parents, but it is not the duty of the Board to assume the functions of Providence and visit the sins of the parent on the child. Necessity compels the State to educate these children, for its own safety is imperilled by the ignorance of sometime voters. Local opinion is often so lax on this subject that the School Committees dare not take action, and, as they do not directly provide the funds, they are not so directly interested as the State is in seeing that there is no wasteful expenditure. It is wonderful how much false sentiment is imported into this question—sentiment that should rather be on the side of the children whose future is being blighted. To keep the little ones from school in order to put them to work is to return to the time before the Factory Acts. We are pleased to find one of our head teachers with so high a public spirit that he has undertaken the duties of truant officer. We curiously await results. Nevertheless, we consider that these duties more directly concern the State, and should be undertaken by the police. Again, we fail to see why even a large school should be closed although the attendance drops as low as twenty. The suggested closing or semi-closing of a school leads many not to trouble about assembling, as they do not expect the school to open. If the teaching of twenty by the normal staff means a loss of power, how much more is it to have all the staff idle! From the point of view of the children's interests it is a matter for extreme regret that, as in the case of Motueka and others, the school should have been closed for the whole of the first quarter. The new regulations dated the 16th March, 1903, making provision for days when less than two-thirds of the roll are present, are of so liberal a nature that there is really no excuse whatever for closing the school except at the regular holidays as defined by the Board's by-laws. The children's interests demand that their opportunities for receiving training should be always available. Except for fixed holidays, the working of the schools should be as regular as that of any other State Department, say, the railway service, and school times should run at least as regularly as the trains. Omitting household schools, of which only five as compared with fifteen last year return 100 per cent., we are glad to see that some twelve still show a high percentage.

There were in the employ of the Board on the 31st December 167 teachers, classified as follows: Head teachers—certificated or licensed 35, uncertificated nil, total 35; assistants—certificated or licensed 39, uncertificated 7, total 46; secondary assistants—certificated or licensed 3, uncertificated 1, total 4; sole teachers—certificated or licensed 43, uncertificated 39, total 82: totals—certificated or licensed 120, uncertificated 47, total 167; totals for 1902—certificated or licensed 117, uncertificated 44, total 161.

Nearly half of our sole teachers are uncertificated, and as in over forty of our smallest schools the salary offered is below £80 a year, one cannot reasonably expect it to attract a certificated teacher. "The Public-school Teachers' Salaries Act, 1901," allows an assistant to be employed in all schools where the average daily attendance is forty-one, therefore the number of assistants has been increased from thirty-nine to forty-six, and those that are uncertificated should understand that their positions are, strictly speaking, only temporary, being so held till certificated teachers are available. The number of pupil-teachers, only one of whom is a male, has been further reduced from thirty-nine to twenty-nine, and on account of the fall in attendance the services of three of these are no longer required. Four pupil-teachers are fully certificated. At the beginning of 1904 our staffs are as provided for in the colonial scale. The number of pupil-teachers is now so small that the supply of those who have finished their training is apparently inadequate to fill the vacancies in the teaching staffs.

At the Pupil-teachers' Entrance Examination in July last only nineteen presented themselves, and eight succeeded in passing. Three of these have already received appointments. Arithmetic and spelling produced the most failures.

The following is a general summary of results for the district as supplied in the annual return:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.	
				1903.	1902.
				Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	157	145	...	14 10	14 9
" VI.	444	431	278	13 8	13 9
" V.	525	499	364	13 0	13 0
" IV.	703	673	533	12 2	12 0
" III.	733	698	568	11 3	11 1
" II.	614	570	505	9 11	9 11
" I.	654	612	496	8 10	8 11
Preparatory	1,751	1,499	...	6 11	6 11
Totals ...	5,581	5,127	2,744	11 4*	...
For 1902 ...	5,698	5,401	2,931	...	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

Apparently a large proportion—over one-third—of those that have passed the Standard IV. examination leave school without passing Standard V., and fully one-sixth of the whole are never even presented for the exemption certificate. The number in Standards VI. and VII. had been steadily growing of late years, till it reached the maximum in 1902 of 676. This year it has fallen to 601. Standard II. is also lower by 79. The numbers in the preparatory and other classes show less variation.

Basing our opinion on the actual work presented to us, and exacting the same standard as in former years, we may roughly classify the schools in regard to efficiency as follows: Good, 20; satisfactory, 49; fair, 39; inferior, 2. The number that produced satisfactory work is much higher than usual, but not, we think, much higher than might be expected in such an unfortunate year. The two whose record was so poor as to warrant their being put in a separate category are both under fresh management, and improvement may with confidence be looked for.

We submit, as usual, a brief criticism upon the treatment which the different subjects receive.

Reading.—We found the reading good, as has been the case in former years, faults of pronunciation, except the clipping of the final "ing," being less noticeable than hitherto. This failing was, however, apparent even in the recitation, to the preparation of which special attention had been given. Some teachers had evidently failed to notice our remarks concerning the reading of dictation tests, for glaring instances were noted of words purposely mispronounced, a practice that cannot fail in the long-run to prove mischievous. Spelling showed numerically worse results than before, only 70 per cent. of the pupils in the four higher standards being successful. In Standard VI. the dictation tests, taken from previously unseen books, with words from prepared Readers, were indifferently rendered by over a third of the candidates. In the new syllabus great importance is rightly attached to word-building, but, though two reading-books are prescribed for each standard, words from only one are required in the spelling tests. Although we may question the advisability of instituting this divorce of reading from spelling, we intend to examine next year strictly on the lines laid down.

Writing.—The writing has not greatly suffered from the bad attendance and is usually satisfactory, yet in some few cases the subject cannot be said to be really taught or efficiently supervised. The character of the writing throughout the school is a reflex of the discipline, good writing being unattainable without good discipline. Too little time is ordinarily given to systematic practice, and some are inclined to hurry the children into small writing, forgetful of the fact that the chief aim should be the formation of a fair-sized good round hand. In the preparatory classes the uniform ruling of slates, to which we called attention last year, is not yet universal; sometimes the ruling had obviously been done by the children themselves. Writing on the side of the pen is a common fault found even in sloping hands, and in the vertical style the letters are still too often crabbed.

Composition.—The suggestions given in our last report for the treatment of this subject have evidently borne some fruit, for in spite of the extra difficulties of the year improvement is noticeable both in the essays and the reproduction of stories. In Standard V., however, the paraphrasing of some verses from their own or lower standard Readers was particularly weak in those schools in which the explanation of the subject-matter of the reading lessons had not received sufficient attention. Some few teachers, perhaps through lack of appreciation, still show a tendency to neglect the reading and comprehension of verse. We acknowledge that the selections in the books are not always the most suitable for children, still the neglect of poetry cannot but stunt the development of literary taste and prevent the pupils from ever attaining to an appreciation of the chief beauties of our language. Some of the productions reviewed by us were so absurd as to be amusing. The lines,

> Marbles storied with his praise,
> Poor Gelert's bones protect,

may possibly have been too difficult an extract for the brains of an ordinary child, but one would hardly have expected the rendering, "The people tell short stories of his life and his bones stick out." What appreciation of English verse does a Sixth Standard lad exhibit in his notion of

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear,

when he renders it, "There is many a gem of light in the dark caves of the ocean bear"? The correcting of sentences was usually right, but the reason, if given, almost invariably wrong, and in Standard VI. similar questions set were poorly answered. An elementary training in this subject is of great practical utility, but methods of teaching still afford much room for improvement. Full oral answering of all questions may, with advantage, be insisted upon, and the oral composition now prescribed for Standards I. and II. should be of great value as initial stages, if the teacher's treatment is not lacking in sympathy, but is such as to call forth active co-operation of each member of the class.

Arithmetic.—This, the subject that always taxes to the utmost the capacity of both teacher and taught, has naturally suffered most from the bad attendance and the shortening of the school year. The proportion that were able to do the departmental tests—53 per cent. of those present—was much lower than usual, the figures for the different standard classes being: Standard III.—1903, 74, 1902 76; Standard IV.—1903 53, 1902 64; Standard V.—1903 37, 1902 51; Standard VI.—1903 41, 1902 55. In these estimates we have, as usual, reckoned as failures those that in arithmetic attempted the work of a lower standard. Though the sums set were somewhat difficult, it cannot be urged that they were beyond the requirements of the syllabus. We very commonly found that questions selected from the lower-standard course were but poorly attempted. Evidently no time had been available for revising back work, and this could not have been thoroughly assimilated. Too rapid promotion, and in some cases the promotion of those who at last examination were deemed unfit, have conduced to these results. The passing of the Act enabling the Governor in Council to introduce the metric system emphasizes the necessity for thoroughly teaching the weights and measures prescribed. In the new syllabus the work has been spread over seven standards, and better grading has been observed in marking the different stages. Limiting the teaching of proportion to the unitary method is, we consider, a serious blot in the system. Several unnecessary items in the former syllabus have been omitted, and oral work is an important factor in the training. It is to be hoped that the scheme adopted will prove less burdensome, and tend to a much-needed improvement.

Geography.—Little improvement was noticeable in the treatment of this subject. We feel assured that much progress would result from a freer use in the oral work of small sketch-maps quickly drawn, and not necessarily of mathematical accuracy. In several schools a beginning was made in correlating plasticine modelling with geography. This is an advance in the right direction. The mathematical and physical sections, on which most stress is laid in the new syllabus, are still the weakest parts of the work.

Drawing.—This was, on the whole, good: the ruler had, however, in the lower standards of a number of the smaller schools played too large a part, and the model-drawing was rarely of a high order. The new regulations, which require five courses in Standard VI. and four in Standard V., appear to us too severe. The programme for Standard VI. comprises scale, pattern-drawing, freehand drawing, elementary solid geometry, and model-drawing.

Grammar.—Under the new code grammar is mainly relegated to Standard VII. This is as it should be. The subject has become overburdened with the veriest *minutiæ* of distinctions. The solving of problematic parts of speech like "but," "as," &c., the compound gerund, and the summation of the uses of the infinitive, &c., may well be left to the secondary school and the university. We can enjoy apples and get good from them without knowing the names of all the kinds, all the varieties of taste and advantage, the various soils, the pests and means of extermination. Life is too short for that. These are technical branches, and the expert must specialise; but the aim hitherto has been to make every one a specialist in grammar. "All must speak," the *literati* of the past have said, and on this peg they have hung a demand for an exhaustive knowledge of grammatical niceties not only of the present but even of the past and dead. "All must speak," yet we do not demand that all should learn acoustics and cram up the niceties of vibration. In future the grammar of function will be treated broadly, and formal grammar will be studied only in the more striking distinctions of number and tense which are continually in use. Gender, the cases of pronouns, and incidental grammar generally will be treated under correction of sentences and in composition without a microscopic delving for illustrations. When one is no longer required to overload the memory he is given the opportunity to cultivate the understanding.

History.—During the past few years there has been a tendency to substitute handwork for history, and this has brought into the minds of some teachers an idea that the subject is unimportant. Probably there is in the individual no more powerful incentive to a progressive raising of the ideals than the sense of ancient birth, and history is in this invaluable, that rightly taught it is able to inspire and upraise the youth of the nation by cultivating the idea of a national pedigree. As the British Empire is the proudest known to historical annals, the long review of its famous story gradually arouses in even the meanest-born an idea of his high estate as one of the great family that has achieved so much. Its traditions cast a light around him that cannot leave him commonplace. Innumerable instances convince him that native ability and well-directed effort have made many a man his own ancestor. He feels that he too must strive. We are profoundly impressed with the conviction that the dynamic force of the Imperial idea is greater than that of all the rivers of Asia. It is with feelings of pleasure, therefore, that we find in the new syllabus stress again laid on history, by setting forth a definite and well-selected though somewhat extensive programme of work.

Science and Object Lessons.—The work in these subjects was satisfactory: fifteen schools had taken the St. John's course in ambulance, several took up agriculture, and the rest physiology. At least one hour a week should be devoted to science, and we should like to see a more extended range of practical illustration.

Recitation.—We were favourably impressed with the success attained under this head. Too rapid an utterance is still tolerated in a few schools. To the teachers in them the caution may not be needless that slow, clear enunciation, even if too slow, is preferable to a garbling of the words that gives no time for the thought to penetrate the brain. Again, a mispronunciation that is bad in reading is unpardonable in the recitation of a poem that has presumably been conned many times. A good book of extracts from poems would supply a want; many poems that cannot be classified as great contain good thoughts aptly expressed.

Handwork.—Sixteen of the schools taking up branches of handwork were classified as ranging from satisfactory to excellent, and four as fair. Although nine schools have during the year been added to the list of those giving instruction in manual work, the teachers generally have not shown remarkable enterprise in this direction. Many have been awaiting such reduction of the subjects of the syllabus as would enable them to make fresh departures. In at least all schools above Grade 6 the junior classes should take up some branch of handwork. In the higher classes (S. 3-7) one hour a week is now sufficient to earn capitation. The subjects undertaken in the schools by the permanent staff include modelling in plasticine, bricklaying, paper-folding, and free-arm drawing. Outside instructors have carried on classes in cookery at Toitoi Valley, and dressmaking at Westport. Sewing has been recognised as a technical subject in ten schools where there are sole male teachers, thus enabling sewing-mistresses to be employed. The claims made for capitation in connection with school classes amount to £236 13s. 5d., to which a few small sums have yet to be added. If brushwork be taken up the initial cost of apparatus must in future be met by capitation from other classes. A second grant of £125 enabled the Board to continue the instruction to teachers' classes, and under this head much good work has been done in free-arm drawing, model-drawing, brushwork, dressmaking, ambulance, and woodwork. In June new regulations were issued, granting in respect of continuation and technical classes a higher rate of capitation, provided that pupils working under certain conditions be taught free—*i.e.*, be granted what are called Junior Technical Scholarships. We believe that these very liberal grants will result in attracting the services of highly qualified instructors. Sums of £500 and £1,000 respectively have been granted towards building technical schools at Reefton and Nelson. It is hoped that these schools will soon be in operation. The building at Reefton is now complete.

Singing.—This is still neglected in sixty-five of our schools, but it is now taught more frequently than hitherto, for the number is twenty less than was recorded last year. Under the new syllabus the teaching of this subject becomes compulsory. We may suggest to the teachers of our smaller schools that singing by ear is better than none at all. As a slight interlude when passing from one lesson to another, there are few exercises so inspiriting as a song. A caution not untimely is conveyed by the framers of the new code when they say that the songs chosen should not exceed the range of the children's voices.

Needlework.—In many cases this was examined by the Inspectors, whose judgment was considered by no means lenient. We found much advantage from carrying round samples from the better schools. Some teachers were inclined to think us hard, and such feeling is detrimental to progress, but on seeing what had been done in other schools similarly situated they usually brightened up, took heart of grace, and appeared determined to attempt improvement. Under the new syllabus simple garments are prescribed for each class. We are of opinion that this will bear severely on the female teachers who, when in charge of large classes, will probably require to work after hours in setting out the work and fixing the garments. As this is an extra subject for them, there appears no valid reason for making it exacting.

Drill.—Classes for instruction of teachers have during the past year been held at Nelson, Westport, and Motueka, and the benefit accruing therefrom appears from the fact that the number of schools giving instruction in drill and physical training has been increased by thirty. Cadet corps have given an impetus to this study; we have corps in training at Nelson, Westport, Reefton, Denniston, Richmond, and Motueka. In accordance with the provisions of the Physical Drill Act of 1901 the Board has set apart the last half-hour of Wednesday for such practice. Under the new syllabus, which contains a lengthy course of work, more importance is rightly attached to physical instruction. We recommend those that have not yet begun these lessons to make selections from the exercises therein set forth.

The general tendency of the new syllabus is to develop the reasoning faculty and scientific observation rather than to impart an extensive knowledge of facts. Greater freedom of classification is granted, and the pass examination, except in certain cases, is practically dispensed with. The teacher's inclination is studied by allowing him some choice of subjects, but we very much regret that the minimum number is still far too high, no appreciable reduction on present requirements being allowed to a small school, where all classes must be taught by the one teacher, a species of school probably rare in countries whose codes have afforded the criterion.

Scholarships.—The examination for scholarships was conducted in accordance with the regulations lately adopted by the Board. The fact that the regulations were somewhat late in appearing may account for the apparently less interest taken in the competition. We give a *résumé* of the salient points of the new scheme. The Board's scholarships are open only to candidates from places where they are out of reach of secondary education. The College Governors' scholarships, on the other hand, are intended to give the best of those at the district high schools an opportunity to prosecute further their secondary studies at Nelson College, and possibly there do university work. The Commissioners' free tuition scholarships are open to girls throughout the district from public and private schools alike, and whether within reach of secondary schools

or not. The Tinline Scholarships which will be offered for competition this year—one for a boy and one for a girl—may be competed for by candidates from any part of Nelson and Marlborough Districts except Nelson City. Children of either sex throughout the district, whether within reach of secondary schools or not, may compete for the bursaries. In all these scholarships except the Commissioners' the age-limit is fourteen years. The girls competing for the Commissioners' must be between fourteen and fifteen years of age.

There were no competitors for the Victoria Scholarships from our district this year. It is a pity that some effort was not made to intercept one or more of these valuable awards, especially as our candidates were so successful on previous occasions. It is pleasing to note that both of the scholars from this district attending Victoria College succeeded in keeping terms at the late examinations. We observe that the regulations in connection with these scholarships have been remodelled and four Senior Victoria Scholarships proposed for later competition. By an Act of the 23rd November last higher education is to be still further encouraged by the granting of National Scholarships to aid such as would not otherwise be able to pay the cost of a University education. These and the Victoria Scholarships are notable steps marking progress towards opening the University freely to all.

The secondary classes of our three high schools, though still growing in popularity, as shown by the December quarter returns, which give the following numbers attending—Westport 77, Motueka 34, Reefton 28—have each this year been labouring under special difficulties. At Westport it was a question of too-limited accommodation for the increased number. Reefton has never had special accommodation provided, and the class has suffered much from changes of teachers, especially unfortunate in that one was occasioned by the sad death of the secondary master shortly after he had received his appointment. Motueka, owing to a time of epidemics being sandwiched in between that of fruit and hop picking, was closed for the whole of the first quarter. Six pupils from the Westport High School last year passed the matriculation test. In connection with these classes we would point out that the difficulty experienced in obtaining qualified teachers has been increased since the Salaries Act came into force. Before that time the Board used to receive as subsidy £9 15s. per head on the average attendance. The whole of this sum could be devoted to the payment of the salaries of secondary-class teachers. Now the grant amounts to only £6 a head, with an extra allowance of £30 per school; but an exceedingly heavy deduction is made in the case of those that do not record a satisfactory number of attendances. The effect of this loss of revenue is severely felt in maintaining an adequate and competent staff for this important work.

At inspection visits we have noticed that the recess-time often encroaches too much upon the working-hours. Recesses varying in amount from 1 hour 15 minutes to 2 hours 30 minutes weekly have been observed. Out of twenty-five hours of working-time 1 hour 40 minutes should be an ample allowance. By the Education Act even Class P are expected to attend for at least four hours a day.

As a help towards the practical training of pupil-teachers in school-management, head teachers should regularly hold criticism lessons for their benefit.

In several instances zealous teachers have tastefully decorated the walls of their schoolrooms with gay and instructive pictures. In order still further to make many of them less dungeon-like and more cheerful and attractive as working-rooms it would, if only the Board could find the means, be advisable to make the painting of the interiors universal. Another matter that urgently calls for more funds for maintenance is that of sanitation. In the towns, where this matter has been most effectively and economically dealt with, the cost is still a heavy drain upon the Committees' allowance, but in the country it has been found almost impossible for Committees with straitened finances to satisfy the demands of the Health Officer. The difficulties of maintenance consequent upon the reduction in the grant available for the purpose led to the summoning of the last conference of Boards. The representations then made to the Minister have not as yet been the means of obtaining any relief, except the 6d. capitation for the employment of relieving teachers.

The need for increased accommodation is most pressing at Coal Creek, the claims for which were brought before the notice of the Board last year. Since then further inconvenience has resulted from the increase of the number enrolled. Some few of the teachers' houses, too, are inadequate for such a purpose, their rental value being far below the house allowances accorded in the scale, while neither in comfort nor in appearance are they in keeping with the dignity of the positions to be maintained. Too often, however, complaint is made of the neglected state of the teacher's garden and house-precints. This is not as it should be; care shown for one's surroundings has, particularly with children, who often regard their teachers with a respect akin to reverence, a high educational value. We quote from Mr. Hill's last report: "The schoolhouse and residence, with the ground attached, should present to the people of a district a standard of neatness and tidiness that is worthy of imitation. Children are imitators by nature, and if they have presented to them at school good surroundings, so as to cultivate their taste and influence habit, the foundation of a good character will be laid."

The question of a retiring-allowance for teachers is still, unfortunately, in abeyance. We hope that the Premier, who throughout his term of office has shown an enlightened and progressive spirit in the treatment of educational questions, will shortly satisfy the crying need of the service by carrying into effect a workable scheme of superannuation. This and the establishment of training colleges would be fitting monuments of his term of office as Minister of Education.

If from what has been written above the impression be left that the work of the year was not characterized on the part of our staff by conscientious effort and a high sense of duty this report would not reflect truly our opinion. Many of our teachers deserve the greatest praise for their industry in the face of much discouragement. The experience of Thring, late headmaster of Uppingham, finds an echo in their hearts: "The real teacher is animated by a high and true ideal towards which he is ever working, to which he is ever finding some response even in apparent

failures." Another saying of the same author is peculiarly applicable at a time when a new syllabus has just been issued: "The real teacher knows that his subject is infinite, and is always learning, himself, to put old things in a new form."

We have, &c.,
G. A. HARKNESS, M.A.,
D. A. STRACHAN, M.A., } Inspectors.

The Chairman, Nelson Education Board.

GREY.

SIR,— Education Office, Greymouth, 10th March, 1904.

I have the honour to present the following report on the schools of the Grey Education District for the year 1903:—

The primary schools, numbering thirty-two, three Catholic schools, the secondary class of the Greymouth District High School, candidates for scholarships, and pupil-teachers were all examined.

The following table gives the general results of the public schools:—

Classes.	Total Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
				Yrs. mos.
Secondary Class, Greymouth District High School	42	35	...	14 10
Standard VII.	20	20	...	
" VI.	124	122	75	14 0
" V.	143	137	112	12 11
" IV.	172	167	134	12 0
" III.	187	182	152	11 1
" II.	168	167	146	9 11
" I.	167	163	146	9 0
Preparatory	571	520	...	7 1
Totals	1,594	1,513	765	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

Last year I had to complain of the number of children absent on the day of examination. This year there is no cause for complaint; on the contrary, the number present was highly gratifying. In standard classes 938 children were present out of a roll number of 961. In thirteen schools every child was present.

The number of times the schools have been opened shows an improvement, but there are still too many odd holidays. If the children lost only the day the school was closed, there would not be much cause for complaint. But the holiday is often protracted, the continuity of the school-work is broken, and the pupils are generally unsettled.

The work of the schools has suffered through the numerous changes of teachers that have occurred through the year. In fifteen schools out of thirty-two changes in the staff have taken place. For many positions offered during the year the Board was unable to obtain certificated teachers, and to the smaller schools a Standard VII. pupil had to be appointed. These do their best; but when it is remembered that no trained teacher takes up a new position without meeting with some difficulties, it is often a matter for wonder how these untrained girls manage as well as they do. The difficulty of procuring certificated teachers in the future, from present appearances will not be lessened. A fair number of our teachers present themselves for examination; few succeed. There is need for well-organized classes for teachers if we are to raise the standard. Training colleges will supply a number of skilled teachers in the future, but these will not come to small districts, where the chances of promotion are slight. We must in this respect work out our own salvation; we must improve the material at our disposal, or we shall continue to lag behind. Might not teachers be assembled during the next winter holidays and various classes be held? The benefits accruing would be manifold.

The following list shows the efficiency marks in the various subjects:—Pass subjects: Reading spelling, and writing, satisfactory; arithmetic and composition, fair. Class subjects: Drawing, object lessons, and recitation, satisfactory; history, geography, and grammar, fair; additional subjects: Singing and needlework, good; drill, satisfactory.

Classification of schools: 2 good, 8 satisfactory, 10 fair, and 12 weak.

The following are a few remarks on the various subjects:—

Reading in our schools is improving but slowly, and until extra reading-matter is provided progress will not be rapid. It should not be too much to ask each child to read two and even three books during the year. If he is to have a love for the subject it must be presented to him in an interesting manner. It frequently happens in our smaller schools that the children of a lower standard are, through listening to their seniors, fairly acquainted with the subject-matter of a reading-book above them, and when they have to study that particular book they have lost the

interest. In some districts of the colony all children are required on examination-day to read unseen tests. Our teachers would do well to practise their children in reading from a strange book. In comprehension the children as a rule answer poorly, and for this in many cases the teacher is to blame. Less thought on the part of the teacher is bestowed on the reading lesson than on any other, and yet if our children are to have a taste for genuine literature the teacher must interest them in the subject. This means preparation. I commend to the notice of teachers a little book by Charles R. Long, M.A, "The Aim and Method of the Reading Lesson." In the Board's office is a number of books kindly sent by the various publishers. These might form the nucleus of a teachers' library.

Spelling and dictation in many schools reaches the mark "Good," and in a well-conducted school there is little fault to be found with this subject.

Writing is not well taught in this district—in fact, in several schools it is not taught at all. Children are found writing one size on the slate, another in the copy-book, and sometimes another in the exercise-book. In one school children attempted upright writing in the copy-books, and sloping writing on their slates and exercise-books. There should be a recognised size for each class, and the pupil must understand what is required of him all through his work. Again and again teachers have been cautioned about attending to correct posture and the proper holding of the pen. A great deal of time is spent in attending to these points in the lower standards, but in the upper standards they are often neglected. As a consequence pupils sit in most unhealthy attitudes, and a great number attempt to write on the side of the pen. Let teachers remember that good writing goes hand-in-hand with good discipline.

Composition in few schools reaches the mark "Good." Not many of our teachers go to the trouble of thinking out a plan of teaching this most important subject. The exercises appear to be chosen in a haphazard fashion, and too little use is made of the reading-book. Yet surely in all our reading lessons there is scope for composition exercise. The oral answering of the pupils, too, is not made so much of as it might be. Our youngest pupils use sentences; crude they may be, but here is the foundation and upon it the thoughtful teacher will always be building.

Arithmetic, although the subject to which the greatest amount of time is given, is still the weakest of the "pass" subjects, and will remain so until more attention is paid to mental arithmetic, or, as some prefer to call it, oral arithmetic. This should in all cases precede the written work. Were this done, and plenty of practice given in concrete examples, teachers would be less surprised at the results furnished by the examination test. To this test teachers must be prepared to find added some simple mental tests, which with the written work will form the basis upon which the arithmetic will be judged.

Of the class subjects grammar is the weakest, and next to it geography. In the latter subject many of our teachers have not yet recognised the utility of beginning to teach the subject from the child's observation. Children can often tell you more about some river in the Old World than they can about the Grey River and its tributaries. It should be obvious to every one that this is the wrong way to go to work. In our own district particularly the materials for successful geographical teaching are close at hand—creeks, rivers, hills, and mountains are close to every school—none is so far away from the sea-coast that the pupils have no opportunity of studying the work of the ocean. The means of transit are every year becoming easier, and teachers themselves must bear the blame if the children's powers of observation are not quickened and developed. Last year teachers were recommended to make their lessons on objects real ones; to let the children know that they have eyes for seeing and hands for handling. To quote from a book recently published: "Before a lesson on roots is given, a large number of roots of common weeds should be pulled up and be examined by the child. He should be asked to say what he sees in the root before he is allowed to see with the teacher's eye; to say what he thinks before he gets the teacher's thought; to suggest his own puzzles about the root before any puzzles are thrust upon him. Then, and not till then, should the orderly lesson be given."

Of the remaining class subjects recitation is the best-taught. Were the comprehension better attended to there should be in many schools little cause for complaint.

Singing is now taken in all the large schools, and in an increasing number of smaller ones. The mark "Excellent" is reserved for those schools which give attention to theory as well as to practice.

Needlework is taught in all schools, and generally with very fair success.

Sanitation.—At my examination visits the schools throughout the district have presented a very clean appearance, and generally there has been a certain amount of preparation for examination-day, but at inspection visits such tidiness was not always found. The grants to School Committees are in many cases so small that little or no provision is made for cleaning, and in the smaller schools this work falls upon the teacher and pupils, who regularly sweep the floor. But something more than this is wanted. An annual grant might be made so that during the summer holidays every school might receive a thorough cleaning—what the housewife calls a "spring cleaning." The dust of years accumulated on walls and rafters would thus be removed. The expense would be slight; the health of the children would be improved, and they would have a practical lesson in thorough cleanliness. As pointed out in some of my examination reports, children cannot be expected to have tidy desks if the school cupboards and the teacher's table are not good examples. It is a pity that there is a necessity to report upon such a subject. The outside premises are not always as clean as I would like to see them, and sufficient attention is not paid to the cleanliness of the tank-water. These are matters that should be reported on by the teachers to the School Committees, who in the interests of public health should take immediate action.

It has been my unpleasant duty at my annual visit to have to speak somewhat plainly: to have in several cases to find fault with the work done. To those who think my standard of judgment a

high one I would like to say that if we are to improve in our life's work we must aim each year to reach a higher level. Let not the standard of "what we ought to be" be degraded to fit in with "what we are." Teachers and Inspectors have but one aim—to train the children that they may become good citizens, useful members of society, a credit to their teachers, who have laid the foundations well and truly.

I have, &c.,
H. SMITH, B.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Grey Education Board.

WESTLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Hokitika, 12th January, 1904.

In presenting the following reports on the results of the inspection and examination of the primary schools of the district, I beg to state that thirty-six public schools and four Catholic schools were examined during the year. Separate reports have been presented relating to the secondary class of the Hokitika District High School, the pupil-teachers, the candidates for scholarships, and the two classes in woodwork. Each of the public schools, apart from those of South Westland, was visited at least once for the purposes of inspection.

The following table presents information relating to the annual examination: —

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Percentage of Total Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Present in Standards I. to VI.	Passed.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.
						Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	37	3·5	35	...	...	14 7
" VI.	81	7·7	78	78	57	13 10
" V.	102	9·7	96	96	75	13 2
" IV.	137	13·1	132	132	111	12 5
" III.	115	11·0	113	113	102	11 1
" II.	127	12·0	124	124	105	9 11
" I.	88	8·4	84	84	83	8 8
Preparatory	363	34·6	315	...	...	6 10
Totals	1,050	...	977	627	533	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

In addition it may be stated that the number of pupils presented in regard to individual subjects in a lower class than the standard in which they had otherwise been placed was: in arithmetic twenty-one, in grammar three, in spelling three. On the other hand, three pupils were presented in a higher class in arithmetic. The number over eight years of age presented in the preparatory class was fifty-eight. The reasons given for the retention of these pupils in the division stated do not call for adverse comment.

One noticeable feature is the failure of a large majority of the schools to remain open during the year on a sufficient number of half-days. Only seven schools succeeded in maintaining a school year of 420 half-days, a number that allows holidays of a total duration of ten weeks. If the efficiency of the schools is to be maintained, a full school year is essential. It is true that in a few cases a satisfactory explanation of the reduction is available; but it is of great importance that School Committees may so arrange and control the allotment of holidays that time is allowed to accomplish the work for which the schools have been established. A second feature is the fact that only half of the schools under sole teachers reach a satisfactory standard in the class subjects. While the teachers concerned should endeavour to remove the defects referred to, the chief remedy called for is a modification of the amount of work required from these schools. The English subjects and arithmetic—especially as they are prescribed in the syllabus recently issued—all schools should be asked to attempt. For the smaller schools in other subjects a number of schemes should be prepared, varying in scope and in the subjects included; such schemes to be adopted on the authority of the local Board of Education according to the conditions existing in each district. All these schools have in common the difficulty of carrying on the work of so many different classes. Other conditions are not the same, however, and, as the teachers vary in attainments from the bare requirements of a Sixth Standard to what is represented by the possession of a full certificate, it is not to be expected that in every school the same course of instruction can even be attempted.

During the year a number of schools of the district have suffered—in some cases severely—through the prevalence of sickness. The two largest schools, however, have established or maintained commendable efficiency, and have presented a full course of instruction, which includes excellent physical training for both girls and boys, and military drill by their respective school cadet corps. Each of these schools devotes a considerable amount of attention to manual and technical instruction, including handwork, practical work in elementary science, and woodwork, instruction in the last being given to a special class held after the ordinary school hours.

The general result of the year's work in the remaining schools is satisfactory, the chief exception being supplied by schools that have maintained a short school year, and a few household schools where the teacher is a member of the family to which the pupils belong. In the latter

there is uniformly a want of diligence and discipline that causes a great reduction in value of the instruction given. In contrast to these, other small schools have been very successful, notably one in South Westland attended by Native children.

As the new syllabus of instruction is still under discussion and has not yet reached its final form, I refrain from a general opinion on the value of the innovations it presents. There is no doubt, however, that in two important directions the changes will be permanent. These are, (1) the reduction in the amount of arithmetic and the insistence, in its instruction, on modern and practical methods; and (2) the increased attention to the intelligent teaching of language and to its intimate connection with the methods of instruction in all branches. The lightening of the burden in arithmetic will enable the teachers to devote more time to oral composition, not only as a separate object of study, but also in connection with instruction and recapitulation in other subjects. Many of the teachers have already recognised the value of good methods of oral answering, and others will follow their example now that an improved opportunity is afforded to establish the instruction on a good basis.

It is generally agreed that the method of teaching English has in the past been excessively analytical, and a great deal has been included in the study of inflections, analysis, and parsing that is of little utility in training the pupils in speech and written composition. True as this is, the rules upon which accuracy of expression is based are, of course, to be learned, and the understanding of these, again, depends on acquaintance with a certain amount of what is sometimes termed "formal grammar." While it is not necessary that the instruction should be mechanical or "formal," there is an irreducible minimum of this technical knowledge that must form part of the course, and its value is such that its inclusion with the compulsory subjects of the revised syllabus was imperative.

With reference to training in oral composition, it is necessary to warn teachers against the pedantry of the uniform insistence on answers in complete sentences. This form may or may not be suitable, according to the nature of the questions. What is important is that the pupil shall have abundant practice in speech in complete statements. The pupils should be required to describe, explain, infer—all in the sentence form, but the direction or question of the teacher should be such as to require such a response. The pupils should be trained that they shall "not only sit down and write a logical and connected narrative without effort, but stand up, and, standing up, think aloud." For this purpose they should be required, in the recapitulation of parts or the whole of the lessons in other subjects, to recount what they have learnt, and in doing so to use statements showing completeness and continuity of thought.

Instruction in oral composition must be based very largely on the experience of the pupils. The syllabus in object lessons and geography, as well as the subjects of both written and oral composition, should be selected, at least partly, from the material supplied by their environment. The mountains, lakes, rivers, trees, birds of their own districts should be studied, and a description of processes of local industries and of events of their own community should form a prominent feature in their exercises. When facility and accuracy of expression have thus been attained the pupils are ready for excursions in a wider field, and if during the primary course they can be led to possess inquiring minds and good habits of observation they are more likely to maintain later an interest in nature-study than if a smattering of science is prepared from text-books for exhibition at annual examinations. Teachers are therefore required to include, as widely as possible, lessons on objects presented to the classes, or of matters that have come under the direct observation of the children. These remarks are not so applicable to defects in the larger schools of the district as to those existing in the smaller schools, where most of the teachers are untrained, and where it is continually necessary to insist on the selection of studies with a view to supply the pupils with training as well as with information.

Four of the Catholic schools of the district were examined. There were 173 pupils on the roll, of whom 162 were present at the time of my visit. Of these seventy-six passed the several standards. One of the larger of the five schools was not examined, as it was closed at the appointed time owing to an epidemic of sickness.

I have, &c.

A. J. MORTON, Inspector.

The Chairman, Westland Education Board.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Christchurch, 28th January, 1904.

We have the honour to present our annual report as Inspectors of the district for the year 1903.

During the year the duties of inspection and examination have been carried out in the usual way in accordance with the regulations, these and other customary engagements fully occupying the time at our disposal. For the seven months May to December, Mr. Thomas Hughes, B.A., headmaster of the Waltham School, acted as Inspector, temporarily taking the place of Dr. Anderson, to whom leave of absence had been granted by the Board to enable him to pay a long-delayed visit to the Mother-country. To Mr. Hughes's lot thus fell a full share of the more arduous part of our duties, and to him our best thanks are due for his zealous, loyal, and efficient co-operation.

The number of schools in the district at the end of the year was 206. Of these 204 were fully examined in due course, the remaining two—small aided schools in secluded neighbourhoods opened or reopened during the year—coming into operation too late for the purpose.

The examination lists presented on the dates of examination contained the names of 19,607 children, as against 19,749 for the year 1902, and 19,842 for 1901. Of this total 17,761 were

present, a proportion sensibly less than usual, the numbers for 1902 and 1901 respectively being 18,430 and 18,351. For certificates of proficiency in the Sixth Standard the candidates numbered 1,462, and of this number 1,401 were successful. Above the Sixth Standard the number so far remains practically constant, the district-high-school movement notwithstanding. In another year the influence will be more apparent.

In the course of examination or inspection our attention has frequently been drawn to the prevalence of youthful ailments materially affecting the attendance, and repeatedly allowances have had to be made on this account in our school reports. A year rarely passes without the appearance in some part of the district of some one form of illness, but in the year just passed our schools have had to encounter quite a series of troubles of the kind, exceptional in variety and duration, beginning with measles and scarlatina and ending with mumps. This has, of course, to a certain extent affected the quality of the work submitted to our notice; otherwise there is little change to note. Our teachers have quietly pursued the even tenor of their way, following much the same lines as in former years, and, in view of the expected appearance of a new syllabus, making few or no departures in methods or subjects of special attention.

Training of Teachers and School-equipment.—A recent report, issued from the Government press of New South Wales, and compiled by two gentlemen of high educational status commissioned to inquire into the public-school systems of Europe and America, contains a vast amount of information on educational topics. The Commissioners in the light of their inquiries make some trenchant criticisms on the local system—particularly the system of training teachers—on which we in New Zealand, quite as much as the Department of Public Instruction for whose guidance the report is prepared, would do well to ponder. In our experience of the conditions of school-control obtaining in New Zealand it may not appear prudent to follow the Commissioners in all their conclusions, but the observations made are none the less valuable to all who seek a measure of reform in the various applications of school-administration.

The first and greatest reform to be made is in the equipment of teachers for the high office they are called upon to fill. Of the provision hitherto made in New Zealand for this all-important purpose we have reason to be frankly ashamed. The purpose is all important, for, whatever the material organization provided, whatever subjects be attempted, or whatever the general educational aim, everything depends on the personality of the teacher—his character, capacity, and professional acquirements and abilities. In view of this obvious truth it can scarcely be credited by any one outside the four corners of the colony that up to the present no general scheme of training has ever been attempted. To this day one half of the country has to depend solely for the equipment of its teachers on the miserably inadequate preparation afforded by a pupil-teacher course, and in the other half the last twelve or thirteen years have seen only some makeshift arrangements at Christchurch and Dunedin, maintained for the greater part of the time by a curtailment of salaries already all too small, and serving but to obscure existing deficiencies.

That steps are now being taken to provide a more efficient preparation we are rejoiced to see: but when we contemplate the omissions of the past on so vital a question, and reflect further on the still more glaring anomaly of the haphazard methods of appointment and promotion, which, despite some attempts at reform, are still unhappily characteristic of this and other portions of the colony, we are lost in amazement that the *personnel* of the service, the estimate in which it is deservedly held, and the work accomplished stand so high as they do. Is it too much to assume that the imperfections of our training arrangements have found a compensation in that very system of individual examination which is now giving way to one more happily conceived in the interests of education? We have no wish to bring the system back; on the contrary, we bid it good-bye with considerable relief; but our respect goes with it into the oblivion of things that have been. It has proved a hard taskmaster to teachers (supervising head teachers alone excepted), to pupils, and (an aspect of the matter to which no sufficient expression has ever been given) to Inspectors alike. It has, as must always have been patent to any but the most superficial observers, failed to encourage the best teachers in the use of the best methods and has cramped their individuality, though rarely, we believe, has intelligent work done under the system gone unrecognised. It has made of Inspectors mere examining drudges, when their best energies should have been directed to their own proper functions of general supervision, counsel, assistance, and general concerns of efficiency. It has not in all cases proved a healthy stimulus to the individual pupil whose status it has determined; but that it has proved a stimulus of a very potent kind to both teacher and pupil no one can affect to deny, and without doubt the very thorough inquiry it has entailed into the work of the principal subjects of the school course has made many a teacher what he is—has given definite aims to efforts which under less stringent conditions would have been uselessly wasted in vain striving amid a hopeless muddle of vague aspirations. It has proved a potent factor, too, we are convinced, in the formation of character in teacher and pupil by setting a high value on honest work thoroughly performed, and has thus contributed not a little to promote the true object of education as distinguished from mere instruction.

The parent, again, has strongly felt its influence. In substituting interest for possible apathy it has proved a training for him as well as for others, though it must be admitted that in many cases the interest created is scarcely of the type that most deserves encouragement and may become embarrassing. The mind of the average parent or school-committeeman rises with difficulty above mere personal considerations. His interest is centred in his own children and the children of his immediate neighbours, and it will take him some years yet to understand that an inquiry into the position which they, each and all of them, occupy in their respective classes lies outside the circle of an Inspector's duties in his visits to a school. That the interest aroused is real is, however, the chief thing to consider, and it will be well indeed if the higher and better conception of the respective duties of teacher and Inspector, which the regulations, as now further amended, take steps to embody, will succeed in maintaining an interest equally strong.

In no department of the preparation of a teacher for his life-work is more thorough training needed than in the modern conception of educational theory. Before he can properly be regarded as a fit educator, his mental processes have to become saturated with the all-embracing principle that the child's development must proceed through the exercise of its own self-activities, by way either of play or of work, in intimate relation with its immediate surroundings. He must further be equipped with a varied knowledge of the practical applications of the principle in every subject with which he has to deal, and to this end must possess a much more intimate acquaintance with the psychology of the young mind and with the world of nature forming its environment than any but a privileged few of our teachers have ever attained to. Educational theory and natural science furnish the bedrock of the superstructure, and in neither of these essentials have we so far made even a remote approximation to the lowest ideals of European countries in the training of their teachers.

The new syllabus, to which we have now to address ourselves, makes greater demands than ever on the qualifications of the teacher, and renders better training imperative. Above all other subjects better training in science, which in this connection may be taken as including geography, is demanded not only in regard to the details of teaching-method, but in the range, depth, and realism of the knowledge acquired. It is particularly unfortunate that science, as at present taught, is the feature of our schools in which their efficiency reaches its lowest ebb. Unsystematic, without co-ordination of parts, rarely commendable, and frequently inferior as it is in method and substance, it presents the teaching in its weakest aspect just where true elementary education requires the school to be strongest. The fault lies partly in the school-equipment, which is commonly insufficient; partly in the exigencies of a programme which allows barely an hour weekly for the subject under favouring circumstances; partly in the existing scheme of inspection, which in most cases has to take method for granted, inquiring only into result; but mainly, we believe, in the fact that the science-training of the teachers themselves is materially defective. With those who have not enjoyed the advantages of a college laboratory it could scarcely be otherwise. In our Normal School the scientific apparatus and illustrative objects at the service of those employed do not suffice, so far as we have ever seen, even to treat the topics experimentally, much less to furnish the means of carrying out a scheme of lessons on a realistic basis. With such an inadequate provision it would be strange indeed if the instruction did not prove barren of any real informing influences, and the barrenness finds its true reflection in the schools. With a teacher who knows his subject much may be done on proper lines, as has often been pointed out, with "simple and inexpensive" apparatus; but no simple and inexpensive training in real study—the only study of things that counts—will serve for the teacher, or give him the requisite power to deal in any effective way with the topics in school. On the absence of a sufficient amount of science-teaching in the training of teachers the Commissioners to whose report we have already referred lay great stress, regarding the defect as of very serious import. "An intelligent attitude to modern industrial and commercial activity," they justly point out, "demands a far greater amount of science now than was requisite in the past," and, recurring frequently to the matter in its various aspects, they strongly urge the necessity of making much fuller provision for a proper realistic treatment in the training college and in schools. It behoves us to learn a similar lesson and speedily mend our ways.

In geography, as in future to be interpreted, the scheme outlined constitutes a revolution in methods and objects of study, and our schools and schoolmasters are to be excused if their mental and material equipment is not yet in a position to deal properly with the newer features of which the conception itself is new—at least, to New Zealand schools. The scheme is drawn on admirable lines, and gives promise of educational developments of the greatest value. Possibly to attempt all contained in it may prove to be beyond us, but, if the method be right, that possibility need not give us serious concern. That the ideal to be sought is worthy of our best efforts no one can question, and in any case we have to remember that to strive in the pursuit of worthy aims is in itself a profitable ambition. Who, besides, will be prepared to deny the truth so quaintly expressed in the familiar lines of George Herbert?—

> Who aimeth at the sky
> Shoots higher far than than he who means a tree.

The keynote of modern education is realism. This is fully recognised in the syllabus that is henceforth to be our guide. Towards natural phenomena the attitude of teacher and pupil must now undergo a complete change. Facts within the daily life and experience of the children must be studied realistically. All learning must be from the things themselves, not about things. The teaching must as far as possible engage the self-activities of the pupil and bear directly on his surroundings. All this, with much more of a similar nature, is excellent in conception, and quite in accordance with the true spirit of the educator, but the educator like other workmen must have his tools. This raises a very practical question—of apparatus, appliances, expense—which has to find an early answer. To provide smaller schools with "simple and inexpensive" apparatus sufficient for science-teaching need raise no difficulty, but behind this there is the graver question of laboratories for district high schools, and possibly for others of the larger type. Proper provision for the accommodation of handwork and domestic-economy classes has again to be considered, and that immediately. Further, for general illustrative purposes many things are wanting which must be furnished before the intentions of the new syllabus can be carried out according to the spirit and method of its prescriptions—sets of weights and measures, pictures and diagrams, physical maps and models, museum specimens with cases to contain them, balances and magnetic compasses are among those to be included in the list. With these matters, the size, shape, and lighting of rooms, and the form and proper adjustment and disposition of the seating accommodation, more particularly in infant departments, require reconsideration. Suitable infant

occupations cannot, for instance, be properly conducted in existing galleries, and the long desks and backless seats, to which in point of school hygiene objection may be taken, must give place, in part at least, to something better suited to the various school employments and the physical needs of the occupants.

With the object of doing the best for our schools in respect of illustrative equipment, we think it very desirable that as complete a collection as possible be made from the stocks of school-furnishing firms in Europe and America of all kinds of appliances (not omitting copies of suitable pictures now produced in numbers for school purposes specially) to form a permanent exhibition for the use of teachers, who would thus obtain many valuable suggestions, and know better what to ask for. With such an exhibition a teachers' library of professional works and reading-room might well be combined with conspicuous advantage.

District High Schools.—A salient feature in the history of the year just past has been the extension of the district-high-school principle to a number of small centres which were previously contented with the educational opportunities of the ordinary primary school. The subjects taken up are in general the usual high-school subjects, the choice being determined quite as much by the scholastic attainments of the young graduates or other teachers we have for the very limited and uncertain emolument available been able to secure as by any special preference on the part of parents. On the prospects of the permanence of the demand it is too early to express an opinion, but, as already indicated, here as elsewhere the need of better equipment in buildings and apparatus to make the education of the best type is sufficiently evident. With the expansion made in this direction we have reason to feel gratified, though personally we should be inclined to welcome more readily an extension of the primary course on the lines of industrial development in conjunction with a further English education without attempting to assume the recognised functions of existing high schools. In our report two years ago we expressed the opinion that in Christchurch itself there was need of a central school on the model of the higher-grade schools of England, which would bridge over the interval between the completion of the primary course at thirteen or fourteen and an industrial apprenticeship or clerical occupation at sixteen or seventeen, and we have since then seen no reason to alter that view. For those who desire to remain at school only an additional year, the Seventh Standard programme without further provision should be sufficient; but outside of this number there must be a good proportion of pupils now spending two or perhaps three years at high schools without the intention of continuing scholastic studies who would be much better provided for in a school specially adapted to their needs. Pending better arrangements, one of the city schools, having more than enough space for the present attendance, might be utilised for the purpose, and the experience thus gained be garnered for future use.

Higher-grade Schools.—By way of illustration, and for convenience of reference, it may be profitable to add a few notes on some examples of the higher-grade school we propose as a model. We draw the information from the voluminous and instructive report of the New South Wales Commissioners.

The higher-grade school had its origin, we believe, some twenty years ago in Birmingham, where conditions comparable with those now existing in the larger towns of New Zealand then invited attention. The more intelligent boys were found to be leaving school at twelve or thirteen years of age, after passing through the ordinary standard course, and some further provision for their education was required. Accordingly a preliminary experiment was made, and, this proving a success, a fully equipped higher-grade school (the Waverley Road School) was some years later started with co-educational classes for technical and commercial training, and was fitted with laboratories, workshops, &c., and all the necessary apparatus for advanced work. In 1898 followed, on similar lines, the George Dixon Higher-grade School for boys and girls. These two schools now supply the educational wants of parents who desire the higher primary education for their children. Admission is granted at about the age of twelve to those who have completed the Fifth Standard course, provided that their intention is to remain at school for another period of at least three years. "These schools in their advanced classes aim at giving their pupils an opportunity for specialising, but they also keep in view the necessity for a wide educational training." In the specialised classes the subjects dealt with are: (*a*) on the side of scientific and technical training—mechanics, theoretical and practical physics (especially electricity), theoretical and practical chemistry, machine construction and drawing, practical plane and solid geometry, and manual work in wood and metal; (*b*) on the side of commercial training—commercial geography, book-keeping, shorthand, mensuration, and one foreign language. For the special requirements of girls provision is also made for domestic economy (including needlework), hygiene, and vocal music. Hours longer than in the ordinary school—9 to 12 and 2 to 5, with quarter-hour intervals morning and afternoon.

An excellent school of the type is the Central Higher-grade School, Manchester, which enjoys the widest and highest reputation, and is immensely popular, many of its pupils coming from long distances. The school is attended by 900 boys and 400 girls, and is conducted in two sections—elementary standard work in the lower school, and science work in the advanced or upper school. The science-teaching and laboratory-equipment are especially admirable.

At Bruntsfield, in Edinburgh, where another notable school of the kind is established, the upper work is divided into a three-years course, the first of which is common to all pupils, as all have started with the standard of the "merit certificate" (comparable with our Sixth Standard "certificate of proficiency"). On the completion of the first year's work, during which the sifting process has been going on under the eye of the headmaster, specialisation is made in the direction on the one hand of industrial and on the other of business pursuits, while general education is provided for by an advanced course of the usual English subjects with one or more modern languages. In the study of English literature it may be noted that the first two years are "devoted to the cultivation of a taste for good literature by the reading of interesting books of good style

and tone; these to be studied largely at home and discussed at school. Examination to be held as to their contents, themes set upon them, different passages paraphrased, and choice passages committed to memory."

Drill.—We have again to record our satisfaction with the attention given to the subjects of military drill and physical training, both of which receive full recognition in all the larger schools. In districts where the number of pupils is too small for profitable instruction in military drill, physical exercises of suitable types are practically universal. The teaching of military drill has received a strong stimulus through the formation and equipment of cadet corps, whose neat uniforms (generally provided from the proceeds of concerts and from private subscriptions) lend effect to massed displays, and form an attraction which, appealing to the tastes of boys, goes far to popularise the cadet movement. Nine city and suburban schools, together with those in the larger provincial centres, including Kaiapoi, Rangiora with Southbrook, Ashburton, and Hampstead, have furnished numbers sufficient for the formation of two battalions. The public appearance of these young people on parade for inspection by Colonel Loveday, and at the annual gathering of the Public Schools Athletic Association in Lancaster Park, where some six hundred of them were assembled on the 29th November, not only furnished a striking testimony to the efficiency of their training, but also provided unquestionable evidence of the excellent discipline maintained by their teachers.

Exercises more appropriate for girls include practice with wands, clubs, and dumb-bells, and are carried out with commendable enthusiasm on the part of both mistresses and pupils. The displays given by the girls at the annual meetings in November always form a specially attractive feature in the day's programme, and are warmly appreciated by the public.

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

The Chairman, North Canterbury Education Board

Summary of Results for the Whole District.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
				Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	309	219	...	...
" VI.	1,462	1,401	1,103	13 9
" V.	2,167	2,012	1,494	12 10
" IV.	2,472	2,311	1,809	11 11
" III.	2,503	2,344	1,885	10 11
" II.	2,297	2,154	1,925	9 10
" I.	2,193	2,039	1,932	8 9
Preparatory	6,204	5,281	...	...
Totals	19,607	17,761	10,148	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

Sir,— Timaru, 28th March, 1904.

We have the honour to present our annual report on the schools of the South Canterbury District for the year 1903.

During the year seventy schools were in operation, and towards the close of the year a new school was opened at Kohika. All the schools were duly inspected and examined. The Roman Catholic schools were examined as usual in the middle of the year. There are five of these in our district, with a total roll number of 644 pupils, of whom 560 were present at our annual visit, and 348 passed in one or other of the standards, being a percentage of 87 of the number present in Standards I. to VI., and of 53 in Standard VI., the only class in which the passes are wholly determined by the Inspector.

The examination of pupil-teachers was held in the beginning of July, and the examination for scholarships in December. In December also a pupil-teacher's entrance examination was conducted for the first time. The names of those that pass this examination are placed in order of merit, and as vacancies occur the Board will make appointments from the list, those young persons who stand highest being given the preference. The higher work of the Waimate, Temuka, and Geraldine District High Schools was examined at the time of our annual visit to these schools, and special reports on the work were submitted to the Board.

Meetings of householders in connection with the establishment of new schools were held at Skipton, Chamberlain, and Willowbridge, and, as the petition of the householders was in each case favourably received by the Board, the building of the schools is now proceeding. The Rosewill Settlement, formerly known as the Levels Estate, having been acquired by the Government, there is every probability that several schools will require to be established in the near future. The settlement extends to over 37,000 acres, and in anticipation of the demand for schools in this large area the Government has reserved four school-sites, each about 5 acres in extent. Great care has been taken to have the sites reserved in the most advantageous positions.

The following is a summary of examination results for the whole district:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
				Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	158	140	...	15 0
" VI.	428	408	279	13 8
" V.	572	539	417	12 9
" IV.	621	601	491	11 10
" III.	604	566	490	10 9
" II.	547	517	475	9 9
" I.	593	529	491	8 10
Preparatory	1,472	1,221	...	6 11
Totals	4,995	4,521	2,643	11 2*

* Mean of average age.

The schools show for the year a decrease of seventy-six in the roll number. The number of those that passed in standards is 2,643, a decrease of 157 from last year. Of 3,160 pupils in Standards I. to VI. present at our annual visit, 2,643 passed, a percentage of 83.6. The number of pupils examined in Standard VI. was 408, of whom 279 passed, giving a percentage of 68.4 as against 73.5 for last year; that is to say, nearly one-third of those that we examined in Standard VI. failed to obtain "certificates of proficiency." We regret to have caused disappointment to so many pupils; but however pleasant it would have been to have recorded a much larger number of passes, we must insist on work of such a kind at this stage as will make the possession of a "certificate of proficiency" something to be valued.

In 1892, with fifty-eight schools in operation, we had a roll number of 5,002. Four years later we reached 5,291, but in 1898 we dropped back to 5,094. Since then the fluctuation from year to year has not been great. This year, with seventy schools, our roll number has gone down to 4,995.

At the present time, when the question of the decrease in the birth-rate is being so widely discussed, the figures showing the roll number are not without interest. Leaving this to be seriously pondered over by all who have any concern for the welfare of the colony, we wish to draw attention to the notable increase in the number of pupils in Standards VI. and VII., in the former the rise being from 225 in 1892 to 428 in 1903, and in the latter from 84 to 158.

In our last report we noted the loss of time that had been caused by the prevalence of children's ailments. This year the schools have suffered in a still greater degree, epidemics of scarlatina, measles, and mumps having swept through the district, scarcely one school escaping. Further, the great snowstorm of last July broke into the attendance, the schools losing from a few days in the seaward portion of the district to a month or more in the higher-lying parts. The absentees at the time of our annual visit numbered 474, as against 298 last year, and many of those that were present were not in a fit state of health to do justice to themselves or their teachers. With everything favourable as far as attendance and health are concerned, it requires all a teacher's skill and energy to maintain the efficiency of his school, so that there is no wonder we have found the preparation of the pupils this year less satisfactory than in the past. It has been especially difficult for teachers to come to a decision as to which pupils should be promoted to a higher standard, and though there were many cases in which we should not have been prepared to grant promotion on the performances of the pupils during our visit, we took the extreme step of substituting the results of our examination for the teacher's in only one or two schools. More frequently than in the past it was left an open question till the day of our visit whether a pupil should be promoted or not, and the settling of the matter has been come to after consultation with us. The large proportion of failures in Standard VI., in some measure attributable to the exceptionally adverse conditions of working that have been referred to, must in the main be set down to the weakness displayed by many teachers in unwisely promoting ill-prepared children from standard to standard, thereby conferring no real benefit on the children themselves, however it may please their parents. By placing such children in a class for which they are unfit the teachers are doing an injustice to those that are fit for a higher class, the presence in which of the unfit retards the progress of all.

Through the resignations of teachers, who have either retired from the service or taken up new positions, we have had vacancies in over one-fourth of our schools, without reckoning changes in the positions of assistants. The places to be filled have been, with one or two exceptions, in schools

with only one teacher. Candidates with certificates and something like adequate training have not always been forthcoming, and the dearth of applicants in several cases has left the Board with only "Hobson's choice" in making the appointments. The scarcity in the supply of teachers is a matter that is exercising the minds of educational authorities in other districts besides ours. Indeed, the dearth of teachers, more especially of male teachers, is engaging public attention not only in this colony but at Home, and as an instance of this we may mention that one of the leading weeklies is offering prizes for the best papers dealing with this subject. When the proposed training colleges for teachers in the larger centres of the colony have been some time in operation we trust to have young teachers available for schools better equipped for their profession than in the past, and there may be an increase in their numbers; but this last is doubtful in the case of male teachers, unless the prospect of higher remuneration for their work is held out; for after all the main factor with most parents in determining what they are to do with their boys is the kind of living these boys may hope to make when they take their places among the workers of the world.

With regard to the work that has been done in the schools, we have found it, as usual, greatly varying in quality, and this must necessarily happen where we have teachers widely differing from one another in professional attainments, experience, and skill in teaching. Though not all highly trained and useful, the teachers as a body carry out their duties with diligence and earnestness of purpose, and are desirous of keeping themselves abreast of the times in all that pertains to successful school-keeping. To those that are seeking for the best for themselves and for their pupils, we have much pleasure in recommending an excellent shilling's worth in "The Aim and Method of the Reading Lesson," by Charles R. Long, an Inspector of Schools of the Education Department of Victoria. In the thirty pages of matter presented to them in this lecture teachers will find much that should be directly helpful to them in their teaching of the most useful and difficult subject of the school course, and they will also find references suggesting a wide field for investigation that should prove of the highest interest and profit.

From May to October Saturday classes for the training of teachers were held in Timaru. Brush drawing and modelling in plasticine were taught by Mr. William Greene His classes were well attended, and sound progress was made by a large proportion of those that took up this work. The woodwork class for men was conducted by Mr. W. Parr, and his teaching was supplemented by a brief course of lessons in the kind of drawing that is necessary for such work. We have to thank Mr. George Simmers, M.A., Principal of the Timaru Boys' High School, for conducting these drawing lessons. A large class of men attended the course of instruction in military drill, the instructor in this class being Major George Crawshaw, first assistant in the Timaru Main School. At the close of the course in brush drawing and modelling an exhibition of work done by the teachers and by pupils of public and private schools in the district was held in the Timaru Main School. Through the kindness of Mr. Elliott, of the Christchurch School of Art, there were exhibited with the local work specimens of what was being done under his direction. Variety was given to the exhibition by the inclusion of specimens of needlework, of freehand drawing, and of writing. The exhibition served its purpose well. Visitors were delighted with what they saw; and teachers who availed themselves of the privilege of examining the work and of comparing their own or their pupils work with that done by others reaped much profit as well as pleasure from the exhibition. The proposal to hold the exhibition originated with Mr. Greene, and to him and a committee of the teachers attending the Saturday classes its success was due.

Towards the end of the year the Education Department issued the new syllabus. At once throughout the colony the requirements of the syllabus and the changes contemplated by its introduction formed the main topic of conversation wherever teachers met. Nor was the discussion confined to teachers. Newspaper-editors took up the theme, and opened their columns to correspondents that knew what they were writing about, and to others that did not. As the syllabus is now under revision, we do not intend to discuss its provisions at this time. We must say, however, that, as we did not join in the chorus of condemnation that in some quarters greeted its first appearance, so now we are not inclined to go all the way with those that talk in a sublime fashion of all that is to be accomplished under the new conditions. Much has been done in our schools for years past on lines that will easily fit in with the new requirements, for we have not been waiting for a new syllabus before introducing and encouraging sound methods of instruction, some of them old enough but fulsomely hailed now as new discoveries. Teachers who have been imbued with the spirit of Herbert Spencer's "Education," and who have not laid aside Currie's "Common School Education" as obsolete, need have no fear of the new syllabus. Clearness of aim, freshness of treatment arising from careful preparation of each day's work, sympathy with child-nature, brightness of manner, strenuous application, untiring industry, and common-sense will insure success now as they have done in the past

We have, &c.,
JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A.,
ALEX. BELL, M.A., } Inspectors.

The Chairman, South Canterbury Education Board.

OTAGO.

SIR,— Education Office, 31st March, 1904.

We have the honour to present our general report for the year 1903.

TABLE SHOWING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOLS IN TERMS OF STANDARD PASSES.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
				Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	503	432	...	15 2
" VI.	1,576	1,521	1,069	13 9
" V.	2,089	2,020	1,535	12 9
" IV.	2,417	2,331	1,874	12 0
" III.	2,444	2,362	1,935	10 10
" II.	2,273	2,230	2,035	9 11
" I.	2,211	2,147	2,019	8 11
Preparatory...	6,455	5,816	...	6 7
Totals	19,968	18,859	10,467	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

If the numbers of this table are compared with the corresponding numbers of last year's table, it will be seen that there is a decline (*a*) of nearly 1½ per cent. in the number of pupils on the roll, and (*b*) in the ratio of passes in every standard, the decline in passes being largest in Standards IV. and V. In Standard IV. it is about 4 per cent., and in Standard V. about 5½ per cent. These are precisely the classes in which passing has, in many schools, been made too easy for the interest of Standard VI.; and the lower ratio of passes indicates, we think, not that the teaching has deteriorated, but that teachers are realising more and more that unless full measure is exacted from Standards IV. and V. good work in Standard VI. is impossible. Under a system in which teachers are responsible for the classification of their pupils, schools must in large measure be judged by the efficiency of the highest class, the class that represents the finished product of the school life of the pupils; and if a teacher fails here his work must be considered unsatisfactory. Judged by this criterion, many schools, some of them large ones, failed to do satisfactory work during the year the work of which is now under review, and it is our deliberate judgment that in some cases the failure was due to too low ideals as to what should be the mental equipment of children passing on to Standard VI. In many cases, no doubt, the ideals were right, but the teachers were not strong enough to resist the pressure of parents for the promotion of their children, and thus a system the keynote of which is freedom of classification by the teacher was marred by those the interest of the children of whom it is intended to serve. It would be a great gain to the intellectual life of the schools if parents could be made to realise not only that passing the standards is not identical with education, but that passing them with inadequate equipment is a formidable hindrance to it.

The decline in the number of children in attendance is, no doubt, part of the great question at present occupying the attention of moralists, statisticians, and statesmen.

The average age of the pupils who passed Standard VI. is 13 years 9 months, and the average age at which Dunedin City and suburban pupils passed it is 13 years 8 months. The average age at which country children passed this standard is therefore but a trifle above that at which the city and suburban children passed it. The sole purpose of the age column seems to be to furnish data for a comparison of the average ages at which the standards are passed in the several education districts. We confess we would rather be among the highest than among the lowest; for we feel sure that, where no provision is made for evening continuation schools and compulsory attendance thereat, it is of advantage to the children that they should be kept at school as long as possible.

EFFICIENCY-MARKS IN SUBJECTS.

Pass Subjects.—Reading, satisfactory; dictation and spelling, good; writing, satisfactory; arithmetic, satisfactory; composition, fair; mean result, satisfactory.

Class Subjects.—*Geography, satisfactory; *drawing, satisfactory; grammar, fair; history, satisfactory; science and object lessons, fair; recitation, satisfactory; mean result, satisfactory.

Additional Subjects.—Singing, satisfactory; needlework, good; drill, satisfactory; mean result, satisfactory.

These details vary little from the corresponding ones of our last report, and the mean marks for the pass and class subjects remain unchanged. The mean mark for the additional subjects has dropped from good to satisfactory, a result due probably to two causes—(1) the great severity of the winter and the prevalence of sickness all over the district during a large part of the year, and (2) the circumstance of a large increase in the number of inexperienced and unclassified teachers employed in small schools.

From the point of view of efficiency, we class the schools as follows: Weak, 3 per cent.; fair, 12 per cent.; satisfactory, 44 per cent.; good to very good, 41 per cent. This classification is based not on the standard passes, which from S1 to S5, both included, are for the most part the teachers',

* Geography and drawing are pass subjects in the Sixth Standard.

but on the ratio of the aggregate of the marks attained to the aggregate attainable in seventeen categories of work. No school is classed as good that did not gain at least 68 per cent., and none as satisfactory that did not gain at least 60 per cent., of the marks attainable. Many of the schools placed in the group "Satisfactory" presented a large amount of good work. It is gratifying to be able to say that a considerable number of small schools have a place in the group "Good to very good."

The reading lesson is often too mechanical to be of high educational value, the teacher making what ought to be an exercise in interpretation by his pupils only an exercise in imitation of his own interpretation of what is read: he works for his pupils, not with them. Now, co-operation is of the essence of good teaching; and, in reading as in other subjects, the work to be a real discipline must be shared by pupils and teacher, the former doing all they can do for themselves and the latter only what he must to help them over difficulties that, after trial, prove beyond their power. It may often be beyond their power to interpret the thought of what they read; but, if they have been well trained to help themselves, it will not be beyond their power, after due personal preparation, to read so as to express what they conceive to be the thought; and his pupils' conception of the thought is precisely what the teacher should get before he proceeds to read or to state his own. If he does not, the reading exercise must fail to realise its chief aim, which is to train the pupils to get for themselves facts and ideas from written speech. In a large number of schools due regard is not paid to this aim. Whether the pupils do or do not get the facts and ideas should be determined by two tests—(*a*) their power to express them in the language of the passage read, and (*b*) their power to express them in their own language. The bearing of the latter test upon composition is obvious. Greatly to the detriment of the mechanics of reading, phonic analysis is almost entirely disregarded in the standard classes.

In the majority of schools spelling is very good; but this result is gained at too great expense of time and effort. Outside the infant classes, there is seldom any attempt made to associate sounds with the letters that usually represent them in written speech, seldom any attempt made to train the pupils to observe how, for example, a vowel following a single consonant affects the sound of a single vowel before the consonant; why the consonant is doubled in such words as *dotting, beginning, stopped, bragging, begged,* and so on; why *k* is inserted in *mimicking;* why *e* is dropped in *changing* and retained in *changeable,* and so on. A child who knows that in *dotting, beginning* and *dropped, t, n,* and *p* are doubled to keep the preceding vowel short, that in *bragging* and *begged* the second *g* is added to keep the first hard and the preceding vowel short, that in *mimicking k* is inserted to keep *c* hard, that in *changing e* is dropped because the vowel *i* is able to keep the *g* soft and the *a* long, and that in *changeable e* is retained because without it the *a* in *able* would make *g* hard, is in possession of phonetic laws that govern large classes of words and is able to do rationally what, without a knowledge of them, he has to do irrationally and by dint of hard grind. Spelling properly taught is a fine training to ear, eye, and understanding; but learnt as at present (for there is little teaching) it is merely a process of cram. We remark further that, since spelling is learnt for purposes of written speech, the pupils should get abundant practice in forming written sentences that illustrate the use of the words the forms of which they have to learn. Knowledge is of value only when it can be applied; and, unless we use what we learn, we learn only to forget.

We must again express our disapprobation of the ungainly attitudes the children are allowed to assume and of the uncanny ways in which they are allowed to hold the pen while writing. Most teachers, we regret to say, seem to regard these things as of no moment either from the hygienic or the economic point of view. It is quite refreshing to come upon a school or a class in which the majority of the pupils sit directly in front of the writing, the back straight, the shoulders level, the chest well thrown out but not touching the desk, the pen pointing towards the shoulder and held between the first two fingers and the thumb, the hand supported on the end of the little finger. Yet this is precisely what the experts recommend; but, unfortunately for the writing and the health of the children, it or anything approaching it is what is seldom seen in our schools.

Composition remains the weakest of the pass subjects and grammar the weakest of the class subjects. Properly understood, grammar is, as we have again and again urged, a department of composition, and we are glad to see that in the new regulations this is at last recognised. Much of the time hitherto spent in "full parsing" and minute "analysis of sentences" as ends in themselves will in future be given to the study and application of the art involved in the build and connection of the sentences. There will be parsing and analysis; but these exercises will be regarded only as handmaids to synthesis, the art of placing the elements of sentences in their most effective setting. Composition is largely a question of right words and word-forms in right places, and right word-forms in right places is entirely a question of grammar. If teachers rise to the occasion, nothing but good can result from the changed prescription of work in composition.

In addition to the exercises written for us at examination-time, we examined a large number written for the teachers during the currency of the year, and found that in many cases they had been inadequately corrected. We found, too, that due regard had not been paid to accuracy and adequacy of expression in the children's written answers to questions in geography, history, and other subjects. Accurate and adequate self-expression is the chief end of education, and to strive to attain it in the formal weekly composition exercise and be indifferent about it in the every-day expression of the pupil is obviously not the way to attain it. With his limited background of experience, the pupil may misconceive what he is asked to speak or write about; but that is no reason for not exacting from him accurate and adequate expression of what he conceives to be right. One other remark is necessary—namely, that some teachers are too careless of diction and grammar in their spoken speech to their classes.

Though in arithmetic the general result does not reach the level of "Good," much good work is done in this subject. There is still in many schools lack of concreteness in the illustrations of the

principles and processes, and too little attention is given to the memorising of acurate verbal statements of the principles illustrated. In the books used are given a large number of very simple examples that are intended to be worked by the pupils and teachers in co-operation in such a way as to bring out the principles involved in the slate-work that follows, and the examples are followed by succinct statements of the principles. In many schools the examples are not worked at all, and in few are the statements of principles memorised by the pupils. It would save much time and be a great gain to the pupils if they were. In the senior classes we have not infrequently to penalise for bad methods or entire lack of method even where the answer is correct; for we hold that, from the point of view of education, the answer, though important, is less important than the method by which it has been reached. Whether, for example, it has been reached by a formula that is not understood or by a process of logical thinking is, it seems to us, a matter of great educational importance. It is, of course, not reasonable to expect a child always to use the best method; but it is reasonable to expect him to set out an orderly sequence of work that shall show his conception of the significance and relation of the data of the problem he is asked to solve. If his conception is wrong, his answer will be wrong; but his effort to express his conception in orderly sequence of sound thinking will be of high educational value to him. Every subject should be made to contribute to the child's self-expression.

Geography is, in many schools, too "bookish" to be of much culture-value. It deals for the most part with the unseen—the configuration, climate, industries, products, &c., of countries that lie beyond our personal ken, and that therefore can be realised only in imagination; and our power so to realise them depends on our mental content of concrete experience. Sense-experience is the foundation of imagination, and the richer the experience the greater the power of imagination. It is therefore of primary importance that before entering upon the study of distant countries the child should be taugh the significance, and learn to speak and interpret the language, of the features of his own "patch of earth and sky"); for his power to imagine and think of other "patches of earth and sky" is limited by his knowledge of his own. Neglect or partial neglect of this fact is the first defect in our teaching of geography. At the present day there is no lack of other aids to the imaginative realisation of the physical, economic, and social conditions of countries other than our own. The curiosity of man leads him to every corner of the world; with him goes the camera; the tale of the camera is told to the world in the illustrated Press; the Press goes to every home. In Otago, for instance, there are the illustrations of the *Otago Witness*, which are available in considerable number to the teachers and pupils of every school in the district. In very issue there are pictures of "patches of earth and sky" other than that of which the child has personal experience. The intelligent study of these and such as these would add greatly to the child's power of imaginative realisation of descriptive geography. Why not use them for this purpose? Lastly, there is the map, which, though to the uninstructed little more than a painted surface, speaks the language of landscape to those who can interpret its signs and conventions. Adequate knowledge of the significance of these is, however, what our pupils too seldom possess.

Drawing is often very good, and there is an increase in the number of schools the pupils of which use it as a mode of expressing what they see in natural objects. Used in this way, it is a fine discipline in observation and self-expression; but used simply as an imitative art it is, we think, not of much educational value. In some schools the time and energy spent in erasing what is done suggests that physical exercise is being brought into correlation with the graphic art.

Handwork now forms an integral part of the work of a considerable number of schools; and great praise is due to the teachers for the efforts they have made, often at no small personal inconvenience, to qualify themselves to give instruction in the new kinds of work prescribed by the Department. Much of the work done in the schools is of creditable quality; and we consider that the cottage-gardening classes, the woodwork classes, and the cookery classes are so far a decided success.

During the year fourteen teachers gained first-class and sixteen second-class certificates in cookery; and a large number of teachers are now preparing for examination in cookery and woodwork. The rooms in which the pupils and teachers have to work are entirely unsuitable. We would therefore urge upon the Board the necessity for proceeding with the erection of the rooms that were designed some time ago.

The methods employed in the teaching of science are improving. Singing is too often wanting in sweetness and taste. Discipline and manners are almost invariably very good. Very few of our country schools are swept and dusted every day, and the condition of the grounds and out-offices is often unsatisfactory. The school furniture and appointments are too frequently abused by those to whom the schoolhouse is let for public or private entertainments. In no case should Committees allow the school floor to be greased for dancing. Great praise is due to some of the Dunedin and suburban Committees for what they have done in providing gymnasiums and in fencing and beautifying the school grounds. They have in these matters set a fine example to other Committees. We wish they would now proceed to set an example in the æsthetics of wall-decoration. The place of honour in this department of education is at present held by a country school; but there the decoration is the work of the teacher.

Standard VII. was represented in ninety-one schools, of which nine are district high schools. The S7 pupils of fifteen of the remaining schools were absent on the day of examination, and those of four of the rest had done only S6 work. The following is our classification of the remainder in respect of this class: Excellent, 1; very good, 3; good, 19; satisfactory, 26; fair, 13; weak, 1.

Fifteen country schools are placed in the group "Good" and two in the group "Very good," and a country school occupies the place of honour, a result that is highly creditable to the teachers of the schools. We have again and again urged that the teaching of S7 work to children to whom the high schools are inaccessible should carry with it the extra payment now given to

district high schools, and nothing that has been urged against it has convinced us that we are wrong in our contention At the end of 1902 there were 170 pupils in the city and suburban schools, and at midwinter of 1903, when these schools were examined, there were 109. It would seem, therefore, that the Department's scheme for continuing the education of those whose parents wish them to remain at school after passing S6 does not meet the needs of the city and suburbs. We discussed this question in our last report, and need not say here what we said there. We are still of opinion that the educational machinery of Dunedin should not be inferior to that of country towns.

We have, &c.,

P. GOYEN,
W. S. FITZGERALD,
C. R. RICHARDSON,
C. R. BOSSENCE,
} Inspectors.

The Secretary, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Invercargill, 1st March, 1904.

We have the honour to submit our report for the year ended the 31st December, 1903.

During the year we accomplished the usual tale of examinations and inspections. The quality of the work done by the pupils did not vary greatly from that done in previous years, nor was there any very striking development in the methods and management of the teachers. We believe that we are within the limits of truth when we say that the teachers, almost without exception, are zealous in the discharge of their duties, and exemplary in their lives and conduct; and we do not hesitate to add that no section of the community bears stouter hearts under adverse circumstances. It is lamentable to reflect that the teachers—especially the male teachers—of the lower-grade schools are so inadequately requited for their labour. In such schools young men may do well for themselves, but there is to be considered the case of men of middle age, and of men approaching the period of the "sere and yellow leaf." From their present income these men can derive little beyond the bare necessaries of life. Some of them by self-sacrifice little short of heroic keep an insurance policy in force; but others—if the truth must be told—walk continually under the shadow of stark poverty. It is, indeed, time that the country should become alive to its responsibilities in this matter.

But to proceed to subjects less sombre. We first glance retrospectively at one or two features of the past year's school-work.

The remarks we made on the subject of handwriting last year bore considerable fruit. In a number of schools the standard of proficiency rose perceptibly, while in others more attention was paid to the subject. The foundation of handwriting, as is the case in every other school subject, is laid in the lower classes, but unfortunately the foundation is sometimes of the worst possible description, and as a consequence the superstructure totally fails to command admiration for uniformity or elegance.

The upper-class pupils were not conspicuously successful in their handling of the Department's test-cards in arithmetic. We incline to think, however, that the failures were in some measure due to the fact that the tests were somewhat more difficult than those set in previous years. It is, to say the least, unfortunate that increased difficulty in arithmetical tests should have coincided with an extension of handwork in the schools. Increased attention to one department of study, in schools where good methods prevail, can be given only at the expense of some other department, and teachers taking up handwork very naturally took exception to the stiffening of the tests in arithmetic.

Physical exercises and military drill have been much in evidence among us during the year. Mr. Hanna's work in the schools is beginning to tell on the carriage and discipline of the pupils. Cadet corps have been started in connection with the three town schools, and battalion parades have been held. We hope to be able in our next report to chronicle a further extension of the cadet movement in the district.

Having said this much about school-work, we may refer, in passing, to the work done by the teachers at the special classes organized last winter. The Board has already indicated its appreciation of the application and the zeal of the students, so many of whom by their success at the City and Guilds of London Institute Examinations reflected credit on themselves and on their teachers. Classes in cookery and woodwork will again be organized, and in order that the available time may be utilised to the best advantage classes in science will also, we hope, be established. It is eminently to be desired that the teachers who were successful at the recent examinations will not allow their skill and knowledge to remain unused, but will endeavour to give their pupils and the community the benefit of their special training.

There is one phase in the work of education in this district that cannot be too seriously considered. We refer to the dearth of competent teachers for the smaller schools, which, of course, are numerous. The outlook in this respect is distinctly gloomy. Nor can we take much comfort from the fact that several pupil-teachers finish their course annually; for these, instead of proceeding to the Training College, will naturally step into vacancies which there is no one else to fill. The remedy, we believe, lies in the total abolition of the pupil-teacher system, which is at best an anomaly and at worst, to put it mildly, a sheer obstruction. If we were in a position to send for a few years a dozen or so of our brightest secondary pupils to take a course in the Training College the difficulty would vanish. As the matter stands we are going from bad to worse. It is the very

irony of fate that at one and the same time we should be introducing into our schools a reformed syllabus and hosts of unqualified teachers.

We have been much struck, on sundry occasions, by the different ways in which different teachers provide for the comfort and entertainment of their pupils. We know schools, for instance, where we are sure to find cleanliness and tidiness, attractive walls, and, in cold weather, bright fires, games, hot tea for lunch, and interesting books and magazines for the pupils to look through—in short, an atmosphere of cheerful contentment. In other schools we have none of these things, but, instead, an atmosphere of cheerless monotony. We trust that teachers will seriously consider whether they are doing their best to secure the comfort and amusement of their pupils. If they do not do so they may rest assured that the children's studies suffer as a consequence. We may here interpose a *caveat* against a certain method of slate-cleaning. It is to be feared that violation of a fundamental principle of hygiene is all too prevalent in not a few schools.

We hope that the suggestion that we made last year concerning school competitions will not be lost sight of. Such competitions would, more than anything else could possibly do, exemplify educational progress and tendency in the district. We believe the time is ripe for a competitive exhibition of school-work in Invercargill, and we are sure that the teachers and the public will readily respond to any demands made on them for the purpose of furthering the project.

A few words may be said regarding prospective changes in the syllabus of primary instruction. How rapid has been the development of opinion in this direction may be judged from the fact that a proposal made at the first Conference of Inspectors, "that nature should be directly studied by the pupils," was regarded as the dream of a visionary. At the recent Conference the same proposal in a vastly more extensive form was accepted without question. But what we wish to indicate is the essence of the change, and this we shall do in a sentence or two. To speak generally, it is a change of mental attitude on the part of the teacher towards the pupil. Specifically, it is twofold. It consists, in the first place, of full recognition of the fact that a child is not merely an instrument to be operated on, but an agent capable of origination and execution. In accordance with this view, various forms of handwork are provided. In the second place, the study of nature is to become one of the vital factors in the mental development of the child. The teacher will, so to speak, become nature's high priest, interpreting to the child every-day phenomena, and leading him to interrogate nature habitually on his own account.

But let us not be misunderstood. The new syllabus is just the old with certain modifications. As the teacher's work has been, so for the most part will it continue to be. His pupils' capacities, dispositions, and temperaments will be as they have been, and he will have to deal with the same physical conditions, the same mental laws, and the same questions of right and wrong. The greater part of his time will be absorbed, as is fitting in a primary school, in an endeavour to give his pupils a speedy understanding of the keys of knowledge—reading, writing, and arithmetic. And that teacher will best serve his day and generation who imparts to them an expeditious, thorough, and comprehensive understanding of the art and principles of these same fundamental subjects.

Concerning the introduction of the new syllabus, we may further state that, with the approval of the Board, we shall for the remainder of this year continue the method of examination that has hitherto prevailed. Teachers, however, will be expected immediately after the annual visit to work on the new lines.

We have, &c.,

JAMES HENDRY,
GEO. D. BRAIK, } Inspectors.

The Secretary, Southland Education Board.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
				Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	238	200	...	14 7
" VI.	731	720	524	13 8
" V.	1,017	983	833	12 10
" IV.	1,121	1,084	927	11 10
" III.	1,172	1,144	1,010	10 11
" II.	1,060	1,028	969	9 11
" I.	1,099	1,074	1,009	8 9
Preparatory	3,150	2,945	...	7 1
Totals	9,588	9,178	5,272	11 2·375*

* Mean of average age.

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