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NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:

REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

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

AUCKLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Auckland, 16th March, 1908.

I have the honour to submit a general report on the public schools of the Auckland Education District for the year 1907.

There were in operation at the end of the year 484 schools, of which eighty-two were half- or part-time schools. The number has increased by twenty-one during the year. The public schools inspected numbered 417; as in the past only one of the grouped part-time schools was inspected. An "annual visit" was made to 472 public schools.

In addition to the above, twenty-four Roman Catholic diocesan schools were inspected and examined, as well as the Parnell Orphan Home School.

The following table shows in summary the statistics for the year as required by the Education Department:—

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	174	108	15 1
" VI	2,076	2,027	14 0
" V	3,118	2,926	13 1
" IV	3,427	3,227	12 3
" III	3,733	3,482	11 4
" II	4,033	3,737	10 4
" I	3,966	3,629	9 4
Preparatory	12,758	10,263	7 3
Totals	33,285	29,399	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

The figures in this table show for the year an increase of 588 in the roll-number, and a decrease of 1,556 in the number present at the Inspector's annual visits. This decrease is entirely due to the widespread prevalence of epidemic sickness, and to long-continued inclement weather while the annual visits were being made.

The total roll-number given above does not include the pupils of some half-dozen schools, including those taken over from the Taranaki Education District in the earlier part of the year. To these no annual visit was made, as the usual time for making that visit to the schools of the neighbourhood had already passed by.

In Standard VI 1,395 certificates of proficiency and 338 certificates of competency were awarded by the Inspectors to pupils of the public schools. Certificates of competency for standards below Standard VI were in many cases awarded on the recommendation of the head teachers of the schools which the pupils had been attending.

At the Roman Catholic diocesan schools there were 2,216 pupils on the rolls: 2,019 were present at the Inspectors' annual visits, and seventy-two certificates of proficiency and twenty-eight certificates of competency in Standard VI were awarded.

Early in the year Mr. William Burnside, M.A., joined the inspectorial staff. He took up his duties early in March. The considerable increase in the number of aided and household schools, all of them situated in districts more or less out of the way, has added to the work of inspection in a much higher proportion than the increased attendance would indicate. In a number of these very small schools, with an attendance not unfrequently below ten, the inspection and the annual visits have been combined in a single day.

The promotions of pupils from class to class now rest with the head teachers. On the whole they are being made with satisfactory discretion. In the larger schools, with one or two exceptions, the classification is thoroughly sound, and promotion is withheld from all unworthy pupils. But in a considerable number of the smaller schools the soundness of the teaching is being impaired by the premature advancement of a certain proportion of the pupils promoted. A good many head teachers of such schools do not as yet sufficiently realise the weighty responsibility imposed on them by having the classification of their pupils placed unreservedly in their hands. Their treatment of this is a matter of fundamental importance for the success of their work as educators. All pupils who are promoted should be able to show considerable power and readiness in dealing with new work, and in particular they should be able to attack all new reading-lessons with ease and understanding. The examination of different sections of classes in different subjects, as now generally practised in the Dominion, does not give the Inspectors any deep insight into the suitability of the classification. More is learned about it at the inspection visits, especially in the smaller schools, and it then becomes evident that a minority of the pupils in a class are in many cases unable to deal with the current class-work in an educative and intelligent spirit. This means that the teaching tends to become a routine of stuffing and memorising, instead of a continuous training of the pupils in habits of self-help and of original and intelligent effort. Unfortunately, in dealing with promotions, the head teachers of many of the smaller schools are often subjected to local pressure, which is not always easy for them to withstand. Parents need to realise that the passing-up of their children from class to class does not mean progress in their education, unless the current class-work can be readily and intelligently dealt with. The ideas and wishes of their children, who are attending the schools, are but fallacious guides on such a question; the head teacher's deliberate judgment is, as they should willingly recognise, an infinitely safer guide. The Inspectors, and I believe the Board also, will firmly support all head teachers who may be threatened with trouble through exercising an honest independence in dealing with promotions, and in keeping the classification of their pupils sound and healthy.

The progress in the public schools has suffered to some degree during the year from the unprecedented train of interruptions of regular attendance caused by the wide prevalence of epidemic sickness and the protracted spell of rainy and stormy weather that continued almost without a break for four of the busiest months of the school year. The inclement weather made the work of the Inspectors in the country districts very trying, and they deserve very great credit for carrying it on without interruption.

For some time past the most pleasing feature in the work of the public schools has been the good and often excellent work done by the pupils of the Standard VI class, who are preparing for the Certificate of Proficiency Examination. The application of the scholars and the progress they make during the year they pass in the Standard VI class are highly creditable both to themselves and to their teachers. Considering the relative difficulty of the examination, the quality and the number of the passes are highly satisfactory. In many of the larger schools nearly all the Standard VI pupils qualify for this certificate. If pupils in the lower standard classes displayed equal interest and application with those in the Standard VI class, we should have a notable and immediate advance in efficiency. In many smaller schools the example of the Standard VI class is not set in vain. "The mere fact," Mr. Burnside notes, "that a small school has one or more candidates for proficiency seems at once to raise the tone and standing of the school." Undoubtedly the prospect of gaining a certificate of proficiency is proving a powerful stimulus to good work. This experience does not countenance the depreciation of school examinations that has been so conspicuous a feature in our recent educational policy. Notwithstanding the unfavourable conditions above referred to, the work of the public schools for the year has been in most respects as satisfactory as in recent years. The larger schools, with very few exceptions, continue to be efficiently conducted, as do the majority of those with a staff of two to four teachers, while the rest are nearly always satisfactory. Of the sole-teacher schools many are well conducted and only a small number can be classed as unsatisfactory. While I consider this rough general estimate of efficiency warranted, there is scope for improvement in many directions, and the reports of my colleagues show that no very marked progress in remedying defects that have been dwelt upon in recent reports to the Board has to be noted. From these reports it is evident that the efficiency with which the more important subjects of study are taught in the schools of the different inspectorial districts varies more widely than might be expected, and that the variations cannot be adequately explained as the outcome of the personal equation of the Inspectors concerned. I am

of opinion that these variations are largely due to the relative number of younger and of older teachers working in a district. Where the younger teachers, and especially the younger men, predominate, the efficiency is distinctly higher. These are the men who are raising education in country districts, and in acknowledging their good service I cannot help feeling that the great weight in connection with professional advancement, now attached to mere length of service, and even to length of tenure of a particular position, must be sadly disheartening to them. The teachers most deserving of advancement are, in my belief, those who have done and are still doing the most efficient service. A teacher who does not reach the best he can do within ten or twelve years of his taking up the work is not very likely to prove a great success later.

In general, reading is fluent and accurate, and in the majority of our schools I consider it is on the whole well taught. Mr. Garrard thinks it is "too expressionless and mechanical," and he adds, "The continual lowering of the voice at the commas is a serious fault." Reading of the latter type has been quite exceptional in my own experience, and no other Inspector refers to it. Mr. Burnside notes "defective phrasing" as the chief blot in the otherwise meritorious teaching of the subject. Mr. Crowe finds "the old fault of indistinct utterance too prevalent" in his district. Both Mr. Purdie and Mr. Stewart record steady improvement, which they attribute largely to the use by teachers and Inspectors of passages previously unseen as tests and exercises. The latter characterizes the reading in several of the larger schools as "excellent," and this praise can be justly bestowed on a number of the larger schools examined by others of the Inspectors. The beneficial effects of a wider course of reading are generally recognised. In many of the smaller schools the primer classes do not read widely enough. In all these, two sets of "Primers" and three sets of "Infant Readers" should be overtaken. This will involve little trouble if the books are taken up in the real order of difficulty. No more sets of the Queen Primer Reading Sheets are to be issued; the Crown Primer Sheets will be used instead. Additional cheap reading-books, mostly fairy-tale and story books, costing a penny or twopence each, can now be made available for supplementary reading, if the head teachers and the local School Committee advise me that they desire their use to be authorised. I do not think that the average teacher takes sufficient pains to make reading lessons interesting; this aim should never be lost sight of. Reading lessons again and again must be fatal to interest; it is infinitely better to take up fresh matter; this nowadays is not difficult, and can be easily done by all who desire it. Silent reading is little used. "Its value as an educational factor," Mr. Purdie writes, "is not yet sufficiently recognised by our teachers." "Simultaneous reading," he adds, "is still of too frequent occurrence."

The comprehension of the language and of the subject-matter of the reading lessons continues to improve. The Inspectors bestow, and will continue to bestow, special attention on this. Mr. Purdie, as I gladly notice, says that "its value as an educational instrument is becoming more fully recognised by teachers year by year." I entirely agree with him when he goes on to say that fine oral reading is not the main object of teaching to read: a clear understanding of the matter and thought, and a vivid realisation of the pictures brought before the mind's eye, are infinitely more important than the reading itself. Evidence that such an understanding and realisation have been secured is the best guarantee we can have that reading is ministering to a sound, stimulating, and broad mental training. Their absence is highly suggestive of mere memory effort and parrot-like repetition, the outcome of simultaneous drill and a deadening mechanical routine.

The Inspectors agree in considering recitation indifferently taught. Passages difficult of understanding are too often chosen. Frequently the repetition suggests that the stanzas have been committed to memory without sufficient preliminary teaching and study of form and meaning. Few of our pupils know what "metre" and "rhyme" mean, though they learn dozens of poems of various structure. Many teachers should be ashamed of the way this part of their work is handled.

Spelling and dictation are in general well taught, but often at an excessive cost of time and labour. It is in the child's every-day vocabulary that mistakes are most common. Why this should be is not easy to understand. In the larger schools, where more time is available, word-building exercises give considerable help in the teaching, and link it to composition. In the smaller ones it is more difficult to turn it to helpful account. Here the cheap text-books, prepared as aids to teachers, might with advantage be more generally used. In the Standard VI class the tests set are in general quite satisfactorily dealt with.

As to writing, Mr. Garrard considers our pupils exceptionally proficient in this subject; Mr. Purdie expresses a similar opinion; all the Inspectors allow that the teaching is quite satisfactory.

Most of the Inspectors express disappointment with the progress that is being made in composition and sentence-structure (including such elements of grammar as are now taught). Mr. Purdie alone speaks of it as being "well done" in the bulk of the schools of his district. As in past years it is especially in the Standard IV and V classes that serious defects are noticeable. In Standard VI much of the backward training of previous years is made good. Mr. Garrard finds the pupils "painfully slow in doing their exercises, while their finished product more often than not consists of a few short scrappy sentences." Mr. Stewart also finds composition "a very weak subject," and he says that "most teachers are unable to draw up a satisfactory plan of work in it." Mr. Burnside's estimate is less unfavourable, the chief defect having been "a general looseness of style, and not a want of matter or lack of intelligence."

In many schools, as I think, too much time is being given up to sentence-structure and work of that type. This instruction deals with the form in which statements (generally given to the pupils) are to be cast; in spirit it is purely formal and critical; it does not foster thought or reflection or place the pupil in the creative attitude. Its *rôle*, though not without importance, is not a primary one, and it should not claim more at most than a third of the total time given to composition. Moreover, sentence-structure is in general slowly and not economically dealt with. The statements to be considered and rearranged are often written on the blackboard in the course of the lesson.

This causes much unnecessary waste of time. A small text-book containing suitable material for the study should be in every pupil's hands, and the work should go on smartly, and often in the light of previous preparation. Frequent rapid revision would then be practicable, and the whole treatment would thus gain in thoroughness and intelligence. For satisfactory work in this department of English study, pupils must be trained to give reasons for the arrangement of the clauses and phrases they consider most suitable. At present this is insufficiently attended to. Reasons for correcting sentences set for criticism or amendment should always be required; the Inspectors seldom find pupils ready to risk an attempt in this direction. It is only by firmly insisting on a clear statement of reasons for changes in the placing of clauses and phrases or in the syntax that the principles that govern these matters can be elicited and made familiar. Discouraging the use of such self-interpreting technical terms as adjective-clause, adjective-phrase, adverb-clause, and so on, which finds so prominent a place in the official syllabus, is doing much harm. Short readily intelligible names for the elements in a sentence are really indispensable to a clear and rapid consideration of their relations. The vague, roundabout ways of asking questions, which are abundantly exemplified in the English cards issued by the Department, instead of helping pupils to think clearly, simply tend to mystify them.

As to the composition exercises, the first and greatest merit they can possess is fulness of matter—evidence of a ready power of thinking. This is the first and also the chief thing to secure; once attained, the other virtues of good arrangement and clear, accurate, and forcible statement will not be so hard to acquire. These virtues, we must recognise, are secondary products and necessarily of later growth. Insistence on the use of short sentences will do much to foster clearness and precision of statement; this point calls for much more strict attention than it generally receives. The long, rambling, disjointed sentence, taking up six or eight lines of foolscap paper, should not be tolerated. A full, varied, and suitable selection of subjects for composition exercises is a most important aid to the teaching of this subject. In few schools are these lists as satisfactory as might be expected. In all schools, and especially in schools where several classes occupy the same room, the subject lesson for successive years should never overlap nor even be very closely allied. This fault is far too prevalent, and through it teachers are constantly gaining wrong impressions of what their pupils can do. The result is that pupils work year after year on a narrow round of ideas, and are not sufficiently called on to exercise thought and reflection in dealing with their exercises. Much of the feebleness of our training in composition is, in my belief, traceable to this one defect. Among subjects suitable for children's exercises, comparisons of animals, plants, and familiar objects should find an important place. "A Candle and a Lamp compared," "A Pine-tree and an Oak-tree compared," are samples of a long list of suitable topics. Descriptions of familiar places and scenes—an orchard, a country store, a blacksmith's shop, a street in a town, a wharf, &c., will afford many suitable topics. Accounts of visits to places and of journeys are also in place, provided that objects seen and *what is thought about them* form the substance of the exercise. The trashy statements of time of starting, of stopping, of arrival, &c., that usually form the staple of such efforts, should not be received as satisfactory by any teacher. The exercise of the imagination can be encouraged by the use of the so-called "autobiographies," and by stories suggested by suitable pictures exhibited to the class. General and abstract topics are suitable only for the highest class, and even there they should be sparingly used. For teaching punctuation, the reproduction in a condensed form of fairly full stories or narratives is very helpful.

Of course, numerous exercises will be given on topics dealt with in other lessons, such as nature-study, civics, health, science, geography, and history, and especially on the pictures and thoughts presented in the poems read in class—above all in those that have been committed to memory. What could be more suitable for this purpose than an account of the life and character of our friend "The Village Blacksmith," or of the early life of the slave as set forth in "The Slave's Dream"? I cannot recall having ever seen in a public school a composition exercise on such a subject.

Help in finding matter for exercises in composition should be given with caution. The *training to think* is one of our chief aims in the teaching, and it must be largely defeated by too liberal suggestions. Probably asking a series of questions about the subject—questions which pupils are not to answer orally or at the moment—is the best way of rousing thought without offering too much by way of suggestion and guidance. In the more advanced classes many suggestive questions might be asked by the pupils themselves, the teacher supplementing them if needful.

I am strongly of opinion that *all work* in composition and sentence-structure that is not done orally should be written in pencil or in ink on paper, and be carefully examined by the teacher, being afterwards considered and amended by the pupil. A great deal of the work now done on slate is wiped out without being properly examined or turned to account for the pupil's training. This is indeed largely unavoidable where slates are used. A fairly good unruled paper, such as is being used at the Normal School, and there costs sixpence a head per annum, could easily be provided for this purpose, and in the smaller schools the older pupils might do the whole of their work in this subject in exercise-books.

Oral composition is making fair progress in the lower classes of many schools. The aims of many teachers are, however, very humble. To answer questions in full sentence form is no doubt satisfactory for very young pupils, but something more should be expected in Standard I. Here the pupils might be encouraged to give several consecutive sentences—short ones, of course—about the subject chosen, and they should be required to give, by way of revision, a connected account of matters elicited by answers to a series of questions given to single pupils. I have dealt with this topic at inordinate length in the hope that the suggestions offered may help to place the teaching of composition on a sounder footing. Teachers must realise that more can often be done than they are now doing, and that earnest thought and planning will be required if real progress is to be made. I incorporate here an extract from Mr. Stewart's report to me, that merits attention. "One point deserves special attention—nine-tenths of the writing of adult life is the writing of different kinds of letters, yet here I find the weakest work. Even in the best-taught schools this is

a weak spot. Much might be done by correlating letter-writing with handwriting. Good models, using familiar names and embodying the needs of the district, should be drawn up by the teachers for transcription; one model of a type would not be satisfactory, as it would tend to stereotype one form; but it would not be too great a tax on the teacher to draw up several of a kind, and these being transcribed during the writing lesson would be of great assistance to the child, when similar exercises were set for composition. The lesson might take this course—*e.g.*, an excuse from a parent for a child's absence; the children from Standard IV to Standard VI taken collectively might be required orally to form such a letter; after this had been done satisfactorily by several, with the help and criticism of the teacher, the classes could be encouraged to make further individual effort in writing."

In too few schools do children show any willingness to state with freedom and fullness what they know. To give evidence of their knowledge—of what they have been taught and may be expected to have assimilated—should not be so unwelcome a task. This is no doubt in considerable measure due to the teacher's predominant use of "teaching questioning," and his neglect of "examination questioning." Every teacher who is to educate must be constantly filling the role of examiner, and using the style of questioning that is appropriate to that process, avoiding unnecessary help and suggestion, and calling for coherent and detailed statements and explanations. Most of the recapitulatory work should be of this type.

Arithmetic is on the whole satisfactorily taught. Mr. Garrard finds it well done in nearly all his schools, and Mr. Purdie gives a similar estimate. Mr. Crowe and Mr. Burnside consider it satisfactory. The chief weakness appears in the Standard V class, though, owing to the heavy syllabus requirements, the subject is not a strong one in the Standard II class. Mr. Grierson fears that the weakness in the subject is due to want of skill in the teaching. Mr. Stewart is distinctly pessimistic. He says, "This is a weak subject, especially in Standard V. The mathematics of the primary school certainly demand more adequate treatment. I attribute the weakness to (*a*) poor blackboard demonstration; (*b*) the fact that most teachers do not recognise that the examples given in mental arithmetic should be of the same type as the slate-work, and that in all cases new rules should be taught from examples capable of mental solution; (*c*) to the neglect of the simple theory and the working of simple cases given in the text-books. I have found hardly a teacher who makes a practice, when a new rule has to be dealt with, of making his class attempt to get up for themselves the printed matter given in explanation of the rule.. A large number of children are quite capable of doing this; it affords a mental stimulus, cultivates independent effort, and the results are consequently more permanent and have a greater educational value."

More of the work in arithmetic could be done on paper, or written up in exercise-books. In general the steps in the working of examples are clearly set out, but brief indications of the meaning or the value of each step are too often omitted. In every example of the nature of a problem such explanations of the steps should be considered indispensable. Long tots should be used at the periodical examinations of all classes above Standard III. It is a great defect in the arithmetic cards issued by the Department that no work of this kind is included in the exercises.

On the whole, drawing is very satisfactorily dealt with, and a great deal of good and not a little admirable work is produced, both in freehand drawing and in brush drawing, in a number of the larger schools. It is desirable that the smaller schools should be supplied with small boards, fitted for placing in the desks, for the teaching of free-arm drawing—an exercise that is producing good results in many of the larger schools. Referring to this subject, Mr. Stewart writes, "Most teachers employ too many crutches; it is no uncommon thing to find children in the upper classes drawing from copies almost covered with ruled guide-lines, the ruler in turn being employed by the child in its reproduction. Now, whilst a moderate use of instruments is quite legitimate in pattern-drawing, they should have no place in freehand—such a practice destroys the value of drawing on a large scale, and hinders the child in obtaining a natural and rapid style. Drawing from objects is very desirable, but teachers should remember that a drawing of a spray of leaves or flowers may involve, and frequently does involve, considerable difficulties in foreshortening. Geometrical drawing receives but scant attention. Plane geometry, to be well taught, needs frequent blackboard demonstration, and may be made the means by an intelligent teacher of considerable mental training. Solid geometry is rarely taken, model-drawing *of a sort* being generally chosen. When we remember how unsuitable are our desk arrangements for teaching model-drawing, and what great technical advantage accrues from a knowledge of solid geometry, we may well express surprise at its neglect."

Drawing from memory is readily done in many schools, but original designs are seldom found in the pupils' drawing-books. In many instances the amount of work done in a permanent form in the course of the year is small, much less than one might expect from the time allowed for the subject. Evidence of random strokes and of much trouble in amending them is often to be seen in the liberal rubbing-out to which the pages testify.

The geography of Course A is intelligently handled in many schools, and is seldom unsatisfactory. As it is intended to be founded on a basis of observation and to be treated as nature-study, the topics selected for teaching should be mainly such as their local surroundings bring under the personal notice of pupils and teachers. Matters that lie outside the range of the pupils' experience and observation, unless they can be illustrated by suitable pictures and models, are not worth taking up. In connection with the work prescribed for Standard VI, helpful diagrams need to be more freely prepared and used. The action of land and sea breezes, and the way the wind blows inwards towards the low-pressure central area in a cyclonic storm, are examples of what is meant. The cyclonic storms, of frequent occurrence in this province, in which the wind blows from the east or the north-east, backs to the north, and then works round through north-west to west, can be readily explained by such a diagram, which, moreover, throws a flood of light on the way in which the distribution of air-pressure influences the direction and force of the wind. The reason for the

change month by month in position at the same hour of the stars of the Southern Cross is rarely understood, and seems to be seldom explained. For teachers seem to know that the earth turns on its axis (roughly speaking) 366 times a year, or at any rate understand the significance of the fact. The alternation of day and night tells us (roughly speaking) of 365 rotations. This leaves one rotation to be accounted for. It is accounted for by the apparent slow movement of the Southern Cross (and most of the stars in the firmament) in a circle from east to west, once in a year. Every day we are carried by the earth's rotation through a complete circle, and nearly one degree more; but we are quite unconscious of the fact that we are carried through more than the complete circle, so we judge that the stars have moved nearly one degree in the opposite direction, or from east to west. It is the very same false judgment as that which we make when, in a quietly moving steamboat, we judge that the wharf or other stationary object is moving past us in the opposite direction to the vessel's motion. There should be little difficulty in getting Standard VI scholars to follow all this; but it is very rarely that the Inspectors find any indication that the matter is understood. Clear reasons for thinking that the earth's axis is inclined to the plane of its orbit are also seldom given. It must, however, be recognised that a lucid exposition of these complex matters is not an easy task for even the older public-school pupils, and I shall continue to be of opinion that much of the Standard VI geography course might be deleted with great benefit to teachers and to pupils.

I would strongly urge the laying-out, in a suitable corner of the playground of every school, of a level plot (say 6 ft. by 4 ft.) for the construction of model and relief maps, and to illustrate the nature of physical features generally. If this plot were made two or three inches lower than the adjoining ground, or had a watertight wooden border to the height of two or three inches above the same, all coast features could be most clearly demonstrated. The small trays and old blackboards that now do duty in this connection are unsatisfactory makeshifts. A supply of sand or friable soil would also have to be provided. The making of these plots would be a useful piece of manual work for the older pupils of a school.

The geography of Course B is dealt with by reading a descriptive work. It is certain that *very little* knowledge of what was formerly known as political and commercial geography is being gained under the system at present in vogue. Many of the older scholars do not know even the capitals of the countries of Europe, or the great ports of the world. Teachers are quite aware of this, and most are quite content to keep the official machinery going without worrying about the outcome of the process. Every year I am more and more convinced that the whole scheme for teaching Course B Geography is unworkable, and is simply disheartening teachers and children. As I said in last year's report, "Permanent knowledge of the more important facts cannot be gained without much revision, and a much more thorough drilling in the possibly dry facts than the syllabus thinks necessary." It is not what is read, but what is mastered and assimilated, that counts in education.

Teaching of history can hardly be said to exist under the present syllabus arrangements. The intelligent reading of some brief history-book is all that is required, and, as Mr. Purdie remarks, "It is rarely that our pupils or teachers deem it desirable to go at all beyond the requirements." We cannot in any circumstance help to do much more than to interest the young in the story of their country. In all schools the Inspectors will expect to find a full definite syllabus of civic instruction. It is most desirable that this subject should be taught continuously year by year. In the smaller schools changes of teachers make the plan of taking it up only in certain years practically unworkable. There are schools in which it has come to be omitted through this difficulty. Mr. Stewart remarks, very justly, that much of the instruction in health given in our schools is too technical. "The teaching should deal with the simplest and most easily understood, the cheapest and most practicable, means of translating sanitary precept into practice, not losing sight of the fact that it is the positive, not the negative, that must be presented to the scholar. The instruction should centre round the *person* and the *home*, and the aim should be to instil the principles of hygiene relating to these."* He recommends "Laws of Health," by Dr. Carstairs Douglas,† to all teachers both as a guide to school hygiene, and as a model of the kind of teaching required in our schools. Mr. Purdie says the work in health is "generally well done." I have noticed that vaccination, the process of germ infection, and the means of checking the same, are rarely touched on. In several instances single pupils were fairly familiar with these matters, though they had received no instruction in them in school.

In the upper classes of the larger schools, suitable lessons of an illustrative and experimental character are given in elementary science; elsewhere nature-study and elementary agriculture are taken up. In the two latter, accurate notes of observations and of experiments and of practical work must be considered indispensable, and illustrative drawings and sketches should be made. As far as possible these should be the original work of the pupils. It is a good plan to place the notes on the right-hand page, and the sketches with needful explanations on the opposite page. Mr. Grierson remarks that nature-study is not sufficiently practical. "I have little hope of improvement in this matter with the present generation of teachers, who have little idea how to study nature themselves." Mr. Garrard finds nature-study "well taught," and remarks that "teachers are sparing no effort to make the teaching instructive and interesting." Mr. Purdie, while noting considerable improvement in nature-study, considers that school gardening is not proving successful, and Mr. Stewart takes much the same view. "The aim of the school garden," the latter says, "is misunderstood. In a number of cases a small school garden is attached to the school, and, valuable as it is in cultivating a love of flowers, it does not do the work a school garden should. The school garden should be the laboratory in which by experiments the children verify and supple-

* Professor Kenwood, quoted by Mr. Stewart.
† Blackie and Son, 1907; price 3s.

ment the knowledge of plant-life given in the school-room. The results there obtained will be by far the most valuable part of the instruction. In most of the smaller country schools the garden is either conspicuous by its absence, or else it is in a neglected condition. "The School Garden," by J. E. Hennesey (Blackie and Son, 1s.), is an excellent little manual that would be of great assistance to teachers taking up this subject. In every case drawing should be correlated with nature-study. The greatest mistake made by the majority of teachers is attempting to cover too much ground. In endeavouring to overtake the work planned they abandon the observational method, which gives the subject its real value."

Both in nature-study and in Course A geography, occasional outdoor excursions are indispensable. They are best taken during the afternoon, and the two objects might be to a large extent combined. In both, the teacher's notes of lessons should in all cases show not only the matter but also the method of the lessons.

Physical culture receives considerable attention in all the larger schools, and in many of the smaller also. In the latter breathing exercises are being more widely practised, and in general a few minutes' exercise is taken at the morning assembly. Where military drill is taken it is generally satisfactory, and is frequently good. Cadet companies are now formed at most schools where the numbers are sufficient, and they are doing very creditable work. This movement has proved a decided help to school discipline.

In the school time-tables very liberal provision is still made for teaching arithmetic, five hours a week being very commonly allowed for it. In a few cases four and a half hours have proved sufficient, and this should be enough in the upper classes of all the larger schools. In many cases transcription and dictation and spelling usurp too much of the time in the higher classes. Many teachers give two hours a week, and some give more, to dictation and spelling, while others teach them quite as efficiently in an hour and a half. In spelling, in writing, and in composition also, careful supervision of every exercise into which they enter saves much special instruction.

Schemes of work to meet the requirements of Regulation 5 have been prepared for most schools during the year. This is a matter of great importance, and it will call for a good deal of revision and alteration in the light of experience to get satisfactory schemes arranged. In many cases they are not drawn out in sufficient detail. To facilitate the examination of their contents the work of each class in each subject for the consecutive periods of a year is best placed together—*e.g.*, the science course for the year would be set out in suitable sections which follow each other without break or the interposition of other matter between the sections. The correlation of subjects needs to be more clearly indicated. The principle of correlation is not being as fully applied as is desirable. Mr. Purdie notes that "The extent to which correlation may be carried out has not often been fully understood or sufficiently studied." One of the finest helps in his work that a teacher can have is thus turned to little account.

The work of the Primer classes is naturally most efficient in the larger schools, where it is often directed by skilful and enthusiastic teachers possessed of special qualifications. In the smaller schools, as mentioned above, the course of reading might well be more extensive and also more carefully graduated. If weekly revision is carried out there should be no occasion for going through any of the reading-books twice over. Spelling is here largely taught by word-building. There is no need to require the pupils to learn the spelling of all the words in the reading lessons. Difficult words omitted might be marked by underlining them in the teacher's copy of the reading-books. In a number of cases I have found that the teachers had no copy of these books. The teaching of number at this stage is in general satisfactory, but it does not improve much. Counters need to be more generally used for silent and desk exercises, as well as during teaching lessons when dealing with numbers under twenty. In the earlier stages all results should be made out by manipulating the counters, after which the result can be recorded on the slate, if it is a silent desk exercise.

Mr. Purdie emphasizes the importance of "continuity of work" among the pupils of the smaller schools. This, as he says, is to be secured only by previous detailed preparation of work, and by a systematic use of the blackboard in setting it out. "The lack of continuity of occupation of pupils is the most serious fault in the management of our small schools—by far the most numerous in the district." Where Primer pupils cannot be kept continuously employed and interested, it will be better to give them extra time for play than to let them acquire the habit of dawdling in school.

Certain kindergarten exercises form a prominent feature in the training of the younger pupils. Paper-folding is very commonly taught, and the manipulation is very satisfactory, but it is seldom sufficiently correlated with drawing, which should be its invariable complement, and it is turned to little account for giving practice in oral expression.

In many country districts the work of the school is greatly retarded by want of punctuality of attendance. If a pupil turns up within an hour and a half of either opening of the school he is reckoned to be present. This means that a pupil, who is credited with being present for a day, may be away for about three hours out of five. This arrangement is most undesirable, and loudly calls for amendment. Mr. Stewart, who has paid special attention to this, says that in quite a number of cases he has seen pupils reach school as late as 10.45 a.m. A good deal of the backward work of some country schools is traceable to this difficulty.

In our schools there is very good order. The discipline, which includes habits of application, is generally good, and in very few schools is it unsatisfactory. A willing, frequently an earnest, spirit of work is displayed; and serious inattention is exceptional. Smartness in work—an important point in discipline—is less commonly met with, and needs to be carefully fostered. Readiness and freedom in oral answering—one of the several indirect tests of discipline—are still relatively infrequent. Many teachers do not grasp their importance as an index to the efficiency of the control of their classes.

From the tenor of this report is is obvious that there is ample scope for improvement in the work of our schools—that we are still far from having reached the ideal for which we are striving; but, though only briefly indicated, there is also very much that reflects credit on their management and on their teachers. In this connection I may quote Mr. Stewart's hopeful words: "I do not wish you to think, because I have mainly dealt with deficiencies and their remedies, that I have found nothing to praise. On the contrary, I believe that in the majority of schools really good work is being done; that many teachers in a quiet unostentatious way are beneficially influencing their pupils for life; that the methods are improving; that the idea of training and mental development are slowly but surely displacing the ideas of mere instruction and memory-work. One thing I could wish, and that is, that our teachers as a whole read more widely. If they did their work would be lifted to a higher plane, and their unconscious influence would be more real and permanent."

All the Inspectors recognise the conscientious and diligent work of the great body of the teachers. If some are too much wedded to routine, and experience difficulty in outgrowing mechanical methods, there is at any rate a very general ambition to make the teacher's work educative by requiring pupils to do their share—the principal share—in the training of school life. There is also a growing recognition of the fact that self-training is the best training, and that it cannot be secured unless pupils are equal to the efforts they are called on to make. Nowadays a great deal is being asked of teachers; all the more do they deserve credit for striving, whenever opportunity offers, to improve their qualifications for their chosen and responsible work.

Mr. Goodwin, who rendered much valuable help during the past year, has now retired from the service after working for thirty-four years as headmaster and Inspector. He has the best wishes of his colleagues that he may enjoy a well-earned rest.

I have, &c.,
D. Petrie, M.A., Chief Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland.

TARANAKI.

Sir,— Education Office, New Plymouth, 31st March, 1908.

We have the honour to submit our annual report for the year ending the 31st December, 1907.

At the beginning of the year, eighty schools (including six half-time schools) were in operation, and, during the year, new schools were established at Newall, Opua, Mahakau, Kaeaea, and Mangapapa. The school at Pohokura was reopened, but, owing to the fall in attendance, was again closed.

The schools at Mangaroa, Matiere, Kaeaea, and Mangapapa were taken over by the Auckland Education Board when that part of the Clifton County in which they are situated was thrown into the newly formed Waitomo County.

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

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	106	98	14 5
" VI	315	304	13 8
" V	440	422	13 3
" IV	632	591	12 2
" III	622	575	11 3
" II	624	572	10 9
" I	658	584	8 10
Preparatory	1,758	1,401	7 6
Totals	5,155	4,547	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

Compared with the return for 1906, the roll-number shows an increase of 76. Owing to the prevalence of epidemics throughout the district, the regularity of attendance was seriously affected, the number present at the Inspector's annual visit being only 4,547, as against 4,805 in 1906.

Standard VII.—The number of pupils in Standard VII was 106, an increase of fifteen. Several of these were pupils in the smaller schools and their teachers deserve credit for undertaking this self-imposed task, and thereby putting within reach of at least a few of the children in the backblocks some of the advantages of a secondary education. It is worth the consideration of the Department whether these teachers are not entitled to some remuneration for the extra work they have so willingly undertaken.

Catholic Schools.—In addition to the public schools, the Roman Catholic schools at New Plymouth, Inglewood, Stratford, Opunake, and also a recently opened school at Inglewood, were inspected and examined. The teachers of these schools still show themselves ready to adopt suggestions offered by the Inspectors, and to fall into line with modern methods of teaching.

These schools presented 276 pupils for examination out of a roll-number of 307.

READING.—As reported last year, in a considerable number of schools reading receives very intelligent treatment, being characterized by fluency and good expression. On the other hand, in a few schools the pupils are allowed to read too hurriedly, with the consequence that phrasing, articulation, enunciation, &c., do not receive the attention they deserve.

We would recommend that, particularly in the lower classes, more special lessons should be given, in which, instead of dealing with all the essentials of good reading, some one feature, such as phrasing, emphasis, volume, or pause, should be dealt with. To crowd too much into one lesson, as is often done, simply leads to confusion on the part of the pupils, who can hardly be expected to grasp all that is attempted to be taught. How absurd it would be for a teacher in the initial stages of, say, a lesson in writing, to deal with more than one principle at a time!

More model reading, illustrated by blackboard exercises culled mainly from the lesson for the day, should be given, especially in the lower classes, where the children are at the imitative stage, and are readily impressed with what they hear or see.

COMPOSITION.—The absence of a sound training in those portions of formal grammar that bear directly on composition is bringing in its train many defects in the written essays. A great number of children are now leaving school ignorant of the mechanism of even the simplest sentence. We are of opinion that, to teach composition thoroughly, it is absolutely necessary to study the grammar of the language more fully than at present. We do not advocate returning to the drudgery of former years, but now so little grammar is taught that it is not uncommon to find pupils, even in the higher standards, unable to recognise the subject and predicate of an easy sentence.

We should also like to see the pupils better trained in the power of differentiating between the different uses of words. An effort should be made to extend the vocabulary more than is done now, so that they may be able to use the truest and most appropriate words.

WRITING.—The general clerical work is, on the whole, carefully done, but in the special writing-books a want of uniformity of style and continuity of treatment were not infrequently noticeable.

Where blank books are used, they should be kept entirely for set headlines and every lesson dated. It is often found that the style of writing varies considerably in the different standards of the same school. Whatever system of writing and figuring is adopted, the principles of it should be adhered to from the preparatory classes to the highest standard.

SPELLING AND DICTATION.—The special spelling test is characterized by accuracy. Punctuation, however, in the dictation exercises, appears to be taught in a somewhat haphazard way. In schools where composition receives systematic treatment, it generally follows that the dictation test is punctuated intelligently, for it stands to reason, if a pupil has a good grip of sentence-structure, he is in a better position to understand the principles underlying correct punctuation.

There is a tendency on the part of inexperienced teachers to devote an undue amount of time to the difficult and more uncommon words of the text-book, to the sacrifice of the simpler words of every-day life. It is surely of more consequence that special attention should be paid, not to jawbreakers, but to those words which will form part and parcel of the vocabulary the child will be called upon to use in his after-life.

Moreover, it is not unusual to find that the whole of the time set apart for a spelling lesson is used up in dictating a long list of the most difficult words and, consequently, very little actual teaching of spelling is undertaken. We should like to see more use made of the blackboard in the course of the spelling lesson.

RECITATION.—The standard aimed at when teaching recitation is certainly not high. Hardly any attempt is made to get the pupils to recite with anything at all approaching elocutionary effect. It would, no doubt, be unreasonable to demand much in the way of elocution, yet some of the simpler rules bearing on delivery are worthy of greater attention being given to them. Recitation too often degenerates into mere repetition.

ARITHMETIC.—The subject is almost, without exception, logically and neatly set out, but leaves much to be desired with respect to accuracy, more particularly in the higher classes.

While we agree that the study of arithmetic has its cultural effect in training the pupils to think closely and logically, yet it has also a bread-and-butter value. Arithmetic is perhaps the subject, more than any other, that is needed in almost every walk of life, but the arithmetic of business does not concern itself so much with the solving of problems, but with the quick and accurate manipulation of figures. While we admit that the solution of problems affords an excellent mental exercise, yet, at the same time, we feel there is a tendency to devote too much time to this class of work, to the detriment of a sound training in the mechanical side of arithmetic; more time could with advantage be given, in the lower standards, to a thorough grounding in the tables and to the ordinary mechanical processes. Where the teaching fails in this respect, the results of our examination almost invariably reveal a lamentable weakness, not so much in the method, but in the accuracy of the work in the higher classes.

SINGING.—We cannot report any marked advance in the cultivation of vocal music. In many cases the teacher might make a better selection of songs; year after year the same hackneyed songs are heard. The pupils must indeed become weary of "Down by the Swanee River," "Scotland's Burning," and "Soldiers of the King." Surely there are plenty of bright and sparkling songs now published, from which a suitable choice might be made.

In the larger schools, part-singing might be more generally taken up. In only one of these schools did we find it taught in a satisfactory manner.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—Military drill or physical instruction is taken up in almost every school, and, on the whole, is conducted in a satisfactory manner. The most noticeable weakness

is the lack of precision and responsiveness in the physical exercises. We are pleased to record that such exercises are selected as will best develop the physique and promote the health of the pupils. With these objects in view, we are glad to see that breathing exercises are coming more and more in general favour.

In the majority of our larger schools cadet corps have been established, and this year these have been formed into two battalions, No. 1 comprising the schools in the northern part of the district, and No. 2 those in the southern. Owing to the difficulty in procuring suitable ranges, cadets have not been able to get sufficient practice in the use of the rifle. We are glad to see that this difficulty has, to some extent, been overcome by the establishment of miniature-rifle ranges.

Geography.—Course "A" geography, we are pleased to record, is well treated and in harmony with the spirit of the syllabus. The teaching aims at cultivating the observation of the pupils. On the other hand, we would recommend that, in drawing up a scheme of geography, teachers should embody in it a certain amount of political geography, as suggested in Course "B." It is not uncommon to find pupils, even in Standard VI, ignorant of the position of some of the most important countries of the world.

History.—Considered as a reading lesson, history has received regular and fairly intelligent treatment. In some of the schools where the teachers are somewhat inexperienced, there is not sufficient use made of maps, pictures, and other auxiliaries, with the object of vitalising the teaching of this subject.

We are pleased to note that, after the prescribed portions of the historical reader have been taken as a reading lesson, some of our more experienced and thoughtful teachers make a selection of ten or twelve subjects, which they treat as special lessons. Where this plan has been adopted, we have as a rule confined our questions to the work covered by the list. We would suggest that, as far as possible, the teacher should choose such subjects as would give him an opportunity of treating history in such a way as to develop in the pupil true patriotism and a strong belief in the possibilities of his own country.

Nature-study.—A genuine attempt is made by most teachers to meet the requirements of the syllabus in the important subject of nature-study, but a few yet fail to understand its true spirit and scope, and fall back on such subjects as do not lend themselves to observational and experimental treatment, or make a spasmodic effort to teach all about roots, leaves, &c., from a botany-book. It is made by them too much of an information lesson; they forget that it is a method rather than a subject. The teacher should assume the attitude of an experimenter on the same footing as his pupils. It is surely not asking teachers too much to keep a list of notes, showing experiments and methods of treatment meted out to the subject.

Such specimens, &c., as can be kept, and which are used in the course of these lessons should be available at the Inspector's visit. It is a commendable feature that, in some of our schools, pupils are encouraged to bring specimens and thereby form the nucleus of a small museum, which must be valuable for reference in connection with such lessons as reading and geography.

Needlework.—Needlework, as regards quality, is very satisfactory, but, in many instances, the prescribed course is not fully covered. Under the Manual Regulations, more of the larger schools might be expected to take up advanced needlework.

Handwork.—It is now universally recognised that, in our primary schools, we should aim at equipping the pupil not only in literary acquirements, but in such subjects as are likely to be of use to him after leaving school. He should be given the power to readily acquire any mechanical occupation he may take up as his work in the future. We therefore think it most important that some form of handwork should be introduced into every school. We would go a step further, and express the opinion that the regulations should be drawn up making attendance at technical schools compulsory, within certain limits, after the pupil has left school.

In twenty-two of our schools, agriculture was recognised by the Department, and Mr. Morison, the Board's agricultural expert, reports that the work progresses favourably, and much useful work is being done. In a farming district, such as Taranaki, teachers might well consider the advisability of taking up agriculture, dairying, or some other kindred subject.

At the beginning of this year instructors in woodwork and cookery were appointed, and classes were established at New Plymouth and Stratford. These were made centres for the neighbouring schools. As an evidence of how this privilege was appreciated, it is sufficient to remark that almost every school that could possibly come in took advantage of it, and close on seven hundred pupils attended these classes.

Promotion of Pupils.—Most of our teachers exercise a wise discretion in promoting pupils from standard to standard, and, as the results of our tests agree on the whole with theirs, we have no hesitation in accepting their promotions.

The standard of promotion should be kept high, and in our best schools this is done, and consequently, in these schools we do not find that every pupil in every standard is promoted, as sometimes happens in schools in charge of weak and inexperienced teachers. Teachers should be chary in promoting children who have, for no good reason, been very irregular, for it stands to reason that these poor attenders must have missed the school training which is such an important part of their education, and, though they may gain a bare pass, yet they cannot possibly have covered the course laid down in the syllabus in such subjects as drawing, nature study, &c.

Schemes of Work.—In many cases the schemes of work for each class required by Regulation 5*a* have not been drawn up as fully and definitely as they should be. These schemes should be mapped out at the beginning of the year, and should show at least the minimum amount of work intended to be covered in each subject for each quarter. When the Inspector visits a school, he should be in a position to know generally what work has been done prior to his visit, and these schemes should be available so that he may, if necessary, test the thoroughness of the work done.

SCHOOL-SURROUNDINGS.—In but few schools do we find that a real pride is taken in beautifying the ground with shrubs, trees, flowers, &c. Pupils, to a great extent, are moulded by their environment, and neatness and tidiness in their surroundings must play an important part in inculcating in them careful and methodical habits.

In future, we intend to report specially on the tidiness of the playground, and the means taken to make the school bright and attractive, and on all of those things that tend to create a good and healthy tone in the school.

Gardens, outbuildings, &c., should be kept in such a condition that they should have a refining influence on the children.

We have, &c.,
W. A. BALLANTYNE, B.A.,
R. G. WHETTER, M.A.,
Inspectors.

The Chairman, Education Board, Taranaki.

WANGANUI.

SIR,— Education Office, Wanganui, 31st March, 1908.

We have the honour to present our report for the year ended 31st December, 1907.

Annual visits were paid to 186 schools, the following being in summary the statistics for year for the whole district:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	255	233	14 11
" VI	912	862	13 11
" V	1,249	1,162	13 0
" IV	1,461	1,390	12 1
" III	1,552	1,442	11 2
" II	1,619	1,529	9 11
" I	1,618	1,500	8 11
Preparatory	4,348	3,561	7 0
Totals	13,014	11,679	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

Though the number of children on the roll at the annual visit shows a substantial increase, the number present was considerably lower than in the two previous years. This is accounted for by the prevalence of sickness in the district during the latter part of last year.

The average age in the Dominion for Standard VI in 1906 was 13 years 9 months. In this district it was 13 years 8 months, but is now 13 years 11 months. The three-months increase in age is probably accounted for by the fact that many of the pupils failed to pass Standard VI in 1906 owing to the increased percentage of marks required, and were therefore, in 1907, spending their second year in the class.

As regards the infant classes, the average age in the Dominion for 1906 was 6 years 9 months. In our own district it is 7 years. The following table shows the age of preparatory class and Standard VI pupils in some of the largest schools in our district, and also the proportion of pupils in the preparatory classes. The table to some extent indicates the different rates of progress made by the pupils of the several schools through the preparatory classes and through the standards.

School.	Percentage of School in Preparatory Classes.	Average.	
		Preparatory.	Standard VI.
		Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Eltham District High	32·5	7 0	14 1
Hawera	30·2	7 5	14 7
Queen's Park	33·5	7 2	13 6
Marton District High	35·1	7 0	13 6
Feilding District High	29·8	7 2	14 1
Campbell Street	36·5	6 6	13 10
Foxton	45·7	7 9	15 7
The Dominion	29·3	6 9	13 9
Wanganui District	33·4	7 0	13 11

NOTE.—In the case of the District High Schools, Standard VII has not been included.

The following is the annual summary for the eight Catholic schools in the district, the numbers not being included in Table I:—

	Roll.	Present.	Average Age. Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII	24	23	14	8
Standard VI	75	63	13	8
Standard V	103	90	12	6
Standard IV	99	91	11	11
Standard III	90	85	11	3
Standard II	72	69	9	7
Standard I	103	94	8	10
Preparatory	273	233	6	3
	839	748		

Proficiency certificates, 36; competency, 15.

The total number of pupils, therefore, on the roll at the time of the annual visit was 13,853, while the total number of schools visited for the purpose of examination was 194.

The following shows in a general way what becomes of our Standard V and Standard VI pupils:—

Number of Children who left School on reaching Standard VI.—In 164 schools 394 pupils left during the period between the 1906 and 1907 annual visits. Number under 14 years of age, 157: Of these, 123 left the school district, 2 went to secondary schools, 26 to work at home, 6 to work away from home. Of the last two groups, 25 pupils left without having obtained exemption certificates. Number over 14 years of age, 237: Of these, 38 left the school district; 7 went to secondary schools, 127 to work at home, 65 to work away from home. It thus appears that 224 children left school without reaching a standard of education higher than that represented by Standard V.

Number of Children who left School on passing Standard VI.—In 164 schools 508 pupils left. Number under 14 years of age, 149: Of these, 30 left the school district, 34 entered a district high school, 23 a secondary school, 44 left to work at home, 17 to work away from home. Number over 14 years of age, 359: Of these, 30 left the school district, 25 entered a district high school, 20 a secondary school, 183 left to work at home, 102 to work away from home.

Standard VI Certificate Examination.—For the proficiency and competency examinations 912 pupils were on the roll, and of these 862 were present at examination. It will be seen that a greater number passed than in 1906, in which year the low percentage of passes was largely due to the stricter test imposed by the Education Department. 1907: 430 gained proficiency certificates, or 50 per cent. of the number present at the examination; 282 gained competency certificates, or 32 per cent. of the number present at the examination: the total percentage of passes was therefore 82. 1906: 349 gained proficiency certificates, or 41 per cent.; 263 gained competency certificates, or 31 per cent.: the total percentage of passes was therefore 74. For the Dominion the percentage was 84.

Candidates for Pupil-teacherships.—The Inspectors met the candidates at the following centres—Hawera, Wanganui, Marton, and Palmerston—and examined them as to their aptitude for teaching, &c. It is matter for congratulation that this year (1908) an increased number of candidates presented themselves, and, as will be seen, they also held higher educational qualifications than the candidates of the previous year. Total number of candidates—1907, 34; 1908, 39; from secondary or district high schools (attended two years or more)—1907, 14; 1908, 21; from primary schools—1907, 20; 1908, 17; matriculated—1907, 4; 1908, 12; passed Civil Service Junior—1907, 8; 1908, 7.

Efficiency of Schools.—Below is a table indicating the Inspectors' opinion of the quality of the work done in the various subjects at the date of their annual visits to the schools, and giving their estimate of the tone and efficiency.

Subject.	Schools in which Subject was—							
	Excellent.	Very Good.	Good.	Satisfactory.	Fair.	Weak.	Inferior.	Not taught.
Reading	...	3	78	77	26	2	...	...
Composition	...	3	56	75	45	7	...	...
Writing	1	6	69	85	20	5	...	...
Spelling	1	23	72	54	26	7	3	...
Recitation	2	7	45	76	37	13	...	...
Arithmetic	...	6	34	64	46	29	7	...
Drawing	1	2	58	74	42	9	...	...
Singing	...	4	33	55	36	10	...	32
Physical Instruction	...	11	58	68	15	...	1	...
Geography	...	1	36	85	46	17	1	...
History	...	1	11	27	19	7	...	109
Nature-study	...	4	43	95	28	8	...	8
Handwork	2	4	60	63	22	2	...	30
Needlework	3	3	53	69	9	4	...	36
Discipline	3	42	92	45	4	...	...	...
Efficiency	...	6	59	92	27	2	...	...

It appears from the above table that the two weakest subjects are arithmetic and geography. In arithmetic forty schools ranked higher and eighty-two lower than satisfactory. In geography, thirty-seven were above and sixty-four below satisfactory. A comparison with the table for 1906 shows that there has been a falling-off in the quality of the arithmetic, but an improvement in geography, composition, and nature-study.

Treatment of Certain Subjects.—Paving the way for some remarks on the treatment of some of the objects of instruction, we may state that during the year, in addition to the information supplied by the Inspectors' reports on individual schools and the Inspector's monthly report, leaflets dealing with these and kindred topics have been sent out to the schools as occasion might require. There is a double advantage in this; the Inspectors' views are disclosed to the teacher without delay, and the Board is saved the rehearsal of a large amount of detail, which, though in its place necessary, can hardly make interesting or edifying reading. While gladly acknowledging the great amount of good work that has been done, we shall here confine ourselves to one or two salient defects. The subject, then, calling most loudly for remark is arithmetic. From the table previously given, it is clear that the quality of this subject has deteriorated. The reasons are to some extent evident. Pupils are now freely promoted who would previously have been made to master the subject as a condition of promotion, and there is in many cases a lack of that thorough and methodical teaching which can alone secure success. If the three branches of the subject, practical, mental, and formal, were properly taken in hand from the beginning, there is no doubt that much better results would be achieved.

Referring, secondly, to the group of subjects coming under the designation of "English," we note that the improvement in the quality of the reading of the pupils recorded last year has been more than maintained. Satisfaction was expressed by the teachers when it was announced that the Board had reverted to Vere Foster's style of handwriting, and general improvement may in consequence be expected. In some schools, a go-as-you-please policy rules with respect to spelling. In the better schools the subject is uniformly good, though even in these more might be done, as was pointed out last year, in the direction of familiarising pupils with the correct spelling of the terms used in connection with the nature study, geography, and elementary-science lessons, especially as the Inspector is willing to include a selection of these in his tests. The subject, however, that we wish particularly to comment on here is English in the specific sense, which embraces written composition, and formal composition by which is meant the analysis and synthesis of sentences. Written composition—the expression of thought on given topics—is uniformly good throughout the district; at a number of schools it is indeed exceptionally good. Our observations lead us to believe, on the other hand, that there is, unfortunately, on the part of some teachers, notwithstanding its great educational value, an indisposition to tackle with serious intent the subject of formal composition. The simplicity of the subject as set out in the syllabus has proved a snare to the unwary. It has been assumed by such that the study of formal grammar may be entirely overlooked, whereas it is the experience of thoughtful teachers that to the extent to which grammar is neglected the foundations of composition in all its forms are sapped. A liberal amount of time is given to the teaching of composition; it is therefore not unreasonable to expect that it should be subjected to thorough and comprehensive treatment.

From the table showing the quality of instruction given in the various subjects, geography appears to be somewhat weak. We have been glad to find that in an increasing number of schools less dependence is being placed on the text-book as a means of teaching the subject; still, the practical work which ought to form the basis of the methods of teaching is not yet given the prominence it deserves. It is a fatal mistake for a teacher to allow his pupils to memorise descriptions or explanations furnished by himself, or found in a book. Only when a child describes and explains a phenomenon in his own words can we be certain how much or how little he really sees and understands. Yet we have frequently heard teachers accept stereotyped answers which served to conceal the pupils' ignorance rather than reveal their knowledge. Thus children often use quite glibly technical terms and phrases which they but faintly understand. Only by questioning his pupils most minutely can the teacher ascertain whether or not he is making his lessons of real educative value. This year we hope to see in all our schools carefully kept notes on all the observational work it is possible to do in connection with the subject. In the appendix will be found some records which show that the scientific method is not everywhere neglected.

District High Schools.—In the appendix will be found a statement of the kind, amount, and quality of the work done by the secondary departments at the district high schools. There are now seven of these departments in the district. To five of them there are attached a laboratory, woodwork-room, and cookery-room, and to the other two there will presently be attached a laboratory and a cookery-room. When suitably staffed, these departments do work of the highest educational value. They furnish to some of our boys and girls, who have successfully finished their primary course, a sound practical training which may be turned to immediate account when they leave school; and to others they afford the means of passing those public examinations which are in large measure the gateways to public occupations and professional careers. We believe that it would be better for the individual and the community if the practical ideal were more and the examination ideal less realised; but we would not be understood to disparage the mental discipline and upbuilding that follows from legitimate preparation for examination. Below is a statement of the scholarships taken and the examinations passed by the pupils from the various district high schools.

—	Board's Senior.	Board's Junior.	Queen's.	Junior National.	Senior Free Place.	Civil Service Junior.	Matriculation.
Eltham	...	...	...	...	1	2	2
Hawera	...	...	...	...	5	5	3
Patea	...	...	...	...	7	7	3
Wanganui ...	...	2	1	1	10	10	5
Marton	...	...	...	...	...	5	...
Feilding	1	...	...	...	4	2	3

The following table gives particulars regarding the attendance in the secondary departments of the district high schools:—

—	Average Roll of Secondary Department for 1907.	Admitted at Beginning of Year.		Number of Pupils who during 1907 were spending			
		From Town Schools.	From other Schools.	First Year.	Second Year.	Third Year.	Fourth Year.
Eltham	22	19	5	25	5	2	...
Hawera	36·8	20	3	25	8	11	2
Patea	21·2	19	2	27	4	...	...
Wanganui ...	60·4	20	11	31	22	7	4
Marton	29·6	8	10	23	7	3	...
Feilding	42·8	22	6	28	6	18	7
Totals ...	212·8	108	37	159	52	41	13

This table shows that during the year 265 pupils were on the roll of the secondary departments Of these only 106 had spent more than one year in the classes. In 1906 there were 139 pupils in their first year; of these, therefore, only 37 per cent. stayed the second year; in other words, 63 per cent. of the pupils remain not more than one year in the secondary department.

Practical Work.—In our district the practical phases of education bulk very largely. In all schools more or less handwork is taken. Country schools with any pretence to progressiveness take school agriculture, or dairying, or both, and the town schools take, in addition to the ordinary forms of handwork, woodwork and cookery, as well as physical measurements. Were it not that a great deal of this practical work is interwoven with the other school subjects, one would be inclined to predict that, by its amount and variety, it would lead to mental obsession rather than to the rescue of schoolwork from the blight of bookishness and unreality. And, in truth, we have perhaps sufficiently yielded to the demand for the practical in education. It remains that we should develope, systematize, as well as bring into accord those parts that lead mainly to practical ends and those that make for mental training and enrichment.

The Teaching of the Teachers.—In our retrospect of the year's work we should include as advancing the cause of education the following: First, the summer school, conducted by Dr. Marshall, whose lectures on the physical geography of the district will be memorable as well for their revelation of scientific method as for their revelation of nature. (2.) The winter school, for uncertificated teachers and teachers of remote schools, which was marked by spirit and success. (3.) A number of our teachers visited the Training College with a view to acquiring a knowledge of recent educational aims and methods. Judging from the notes and impressions presented to the Board, one is assured that the teachers returned to their schools animated by a spirit of progressiveness and of love toward their work and their children. (4.) As in former years, Saturday classes—some of them entirely successful classes—were held for the instruction of teachers in agricultural and dairy science, woodwork, cookery, physiography, and handwork. (5.) The competition for the travelling scholarships produced some very thoughtful papers. (6.) The head teachers of the observation schools deserve the thanks of the Board for the trouble they have taken with visiting teachers. These schools play no mean part in increasing the educational efficiency of the district, and it is a matter for regret that more teachers do not avail themselves of the facilities for training which they afford. (7.) Educational periodicals were regularly sent out to different centres during the year. The result of this experiment has not, so far, been so gratifying as might have been expected.

Moral and Physical Training.—Hitherto we have dealt with the work of the schools as directed towards the production of manual and mental capacity. Were we to say nothing of physical and moral development our review would be sadly incomplete. The organization of the schools in most cases fortunately permits a large amount of corporate life, which manifests itself not less in the school garden and the school library, than in school games. It is thus that our pupils acquire habits of spending their leisure hours rationally, and so is fulfilled one of the great purposes of every system of education worth the name. It is thus, too, that they find physical and moral healing and invigoration. The health of our pupils will not be assured by the advent of the doctor in school, unless both it and its environments are pervaded by healthy conditions. Abundance of fresh air, scrupulous cleanliness, spacious play-ground, and a buoyant social atmos-

phere—these are the conditions of physical development. Nor will the best moral tone be secured by what transpires in the class-rooms, where impressions of right and wrong are much less vivid and enduring than those obtained on the playground, and where the discipline of consequences is much less sharp. The corporate life of the school, too, especially as seen in the playground, affords a stable basis for instruction in civics, for there the pupils enjoy a large measure of individual liberty, retained only by the playground regulations and the good opinion of their playmates.

We are glad to recognise the earnestness of our coadjutors, Misses Mollison and Fergus, and Messrs. Grant, Brown, Clark, and Bannister; and to the teachers, to whose loyal services to the Board we willingly testify, we owe a debt of gratitude for sympathy and assistance in the work that we have been called upon to perform jointly with them.

We are, &c.,
G. D. Braik.
James Milne.
T. B. Strong.

The Chairman, Education Board, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON.

Sir,— Education Office, Wellington, February, 1908.

We have the honour to present our annual report on the condition of the primary schools of the Wellington Education District.

During the past year 159 schools, including ten district high schools, have been in operation—that is, four more than for 1906. Five new aided schools were opened—Homeburn, Kauhiku, Kaikuri, Pakowai, and Pakaraka; while one, Tikaramonga was closed. All the schools in operation during the whole year were examined, and with the exception of Akitio, all received a second visit of inspection. Three of the aided schools were not visited, as they had not been opened when the Inspector was paying his annual visit to the district; and one, Homeburn, was closed a few months after its opening. The Normal School was examined by the Principal of the Training College. In addition to the above, nine Catholic schools were also examined and reported upon.

The following summary is taken from the annual return forwarded to the Education Department:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age o Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	500	463	14 9
" VI	1,379	1,326	13 8
" V	1,704	1,626	12 10
" IV	1,931	1,841	11 10
" III	2,087	1,970	10 10
" II	2,097	1,987	9 10
" I	1,910	1,762	8 9
Preparatory	5,328	4,491	6 10
Totals	16,936	15,466	11 2*

* Mean of average age.

These totals, as compared with last year's numbers, show an increase of 127 children on the roll, but a decrease of 275 in the number present at the time of the Inspector's annual visit. There is a slight shrinkage in Standards VII, VI, IV, and I, while the other classes account for the increase.

The rate of increase for the past few years has hardly been maintained, as will be seen from the following table:—

	Roll.	Present.
1905	16,505	15,510
1906	16,809	15,741
1907	16,936	15,466

These totals do not include children attending the Catholic schools with a roll-number of 1,339. This brings the total number of children examined during the year to 18,275.

Accommodation.—As the question of accommodation, on which we have reported in detail to the Board during the year, will be referred to in the Chairman's report, we do not propose to dwell upon it here. We should, however, like to say that provision should be made for residences for the lower-grade country schools. In many cases teachers are unable to obtain suitable lodgings, a difficulty which not only prevents many from applying for these schools, but also induces successful applicants to leave for other posts at the earliest opportunity. Moreover, the house allowance is not adequate, nor is the salary stable enough to secure continuity of service. The want of a suitable residence and the insecurity of salary are the two chief causes of the inefficiency of many of these schools, and any steps that can be taken to remedy these two defects will contribute largely to greater efficiency.

In forming our estimate of the general efficiency of the schools in the district we have had regard to the fact that the past year has been quite an exceptional one in the matter of sickness, which has affected both children and teachers. In many places epidemics of scarlet fever, whooping-cough, measles, and influenza have succeeded one another without intermission. The loss of time and the disorganization resulting from this have naturally affected the work of all schools, but more especially those where the children have long distances to come over bad roads. Taking these circumstances into consideration, we have classified the schools as—satisfactory to good, 117; fair, 31; inferior, 11. The latter schools belong chiefly to Grades 0 and 1, and in nine out of the eleven changes have been made in the management.

EXAMINATIONS.—In anticipation of the new regulations to be issued by the Education Department, we advised those schools examined after June to delay the majority of their promotions until the end of the year. In those schools examined in the early part of the year the case of the proficiency candidates who failed to come up to requirements at the annual visit was met by a supplementary examination which was held in December. This arrangement, though unsatisfactory in many ways, has, we hope, done something to bring all the schools of our district into line, and now, with a few exceptions, the new year's work is beginning in January, 1908. A reference to the number of proficiency certificates issued at the annual visit shows a decrease when compared with 1906, but this is counterbalanced by the number issued in December at the special examination. While on the subject of certificates we once more take the opportunity of advocating the substitution of a leaving certificate for the certificates of competency and proficiency of Standard VI. A leaving certificate granted by the Inspector in the ordinary course of school-inspection and after consultation with the teacher, would in a measure safeguard our elementary schools from the perfect fever of examination which at the end of the year appears to infect every educational institution in the country. The Inspector's examination for certificates of proficiency is, moreover, overlapped by the Department's examination for free places. At the December examinations for Junior National Scholarships and free places, there were over two hundred candidates from this district alone, practically all of whom had already been examined for free places at their own schools, and the majority of them within a few weeks. One or other of these examinations is certainly unnecessary. The educational systems of America and Germany are continually being held up as patterns of excellence, and if in these countries the step from the secondary school to the university even, is free from the examination incubus, surely in our case the child under fourteen years of age can be passed from his elementary to his secondary course without having to undergo any special test. If the Inspector and the teacher, with their personal knowledge of a child's work and capacity, are not competent to decide on his fitness or otherwise for a secondary course, then they are certainly not competent to direct and control his primary course. One of the arguments advanced in favour of the examination test for free places is that otherwise there would be a certain number of children receiving the benefit of free secondary education who would make no return to the State for the money they cost. We do not think that this idea is in consonance with the higher ideals of education, and in any case, considering the extreme complexity of the child-mind and the various lines along which it may develop, it is a bold thing to say that, because a child may not reach a certain arbitrary standard in such a subject as, say, arithmetic, he is therefore to be debarred from the advantages that secondary education may confer.

ENGLISH.—While we confidently assess the reading of our district as satisfactory, we feel that many teachers do not appreciate its importance as an index to the child's general culture. Mechanical accuracy—excellent in its way—occupies too prominent a position with both teacher and pupil, for we must remember that practical power is only a means of intellectual power. Purity of accent, correct phrasing and intonation that denote an intelligent grasp of the author's meaning, must be the most real indications of the teacher's influence and the literary atmosphere of the school. What we have to say here, of course, applies not only to reading, but also to recitation, and more particularly to the ordinary speech of the child. There is no fact so vital to the teacher's work, as the fact that the mind can only grow as it has the power to express itself, and further (as Professor Laurie says) "It is round the language learned at the mother's knee that the whole life of feeling, emotion, and thought gathers" and finds expression. In this connection the influence of the teacher must often be pitted against that of the home and the street—influences ever present, and in many cases dominant over others operating in the schoolroom. We would again impress upon some of our younger teachers the fact that example is better than precept. Coming to matters of detail, we must here refer to a reproach urged with a certain amount of justice against our schools—the need for purity of accent. Failure to attain it appears to us to be due mainly to the following faults: (1.) Slovenliness of speech, as shown in *usulu*, *yestideh*, *las*, *supprise*, &c. Such mistakes cannot be a noticeable feature in a well-disciplined school. (2.) Failure to appreciate the value of the common vowel-sounds—*e.g.*, *moine*, *laig*, *teown* (and more recent developments), *ut* for it, *plasuz* for places. Careful phonetic drill in the lower standards is the only effective means of coping with these faults. This whole question is intimately connected with spelling, with which, so far as its mechanical accuracy is concerned, we are well satisfied. When we come, however, to consider its effect on enunciation we feel that its influence is practically nil. We are unconventional enough to look forward to the time when such reasonable measure of spelling-reform shall be brought about as will not only relieve the child of much useless drudgery, but will also make spelling what it ought to be—a powerful factor in teaching language, both spoken and written. Are we not too often indifferent to the troubles of the little ones struggling with the harassing contradictions between the spoken and written forms of the same words? Apart altogether from our own judgment in the matter, may we not accept the assurance of such authorities as Professor Skeat and Dr. Sweet that the old bogey of a dethroned etymology has lost its terrors; that reform, while it remorselessly prunes unauthorised interpolations and excrescences, will do more than anything else to lead us back to the "well of English undefiled." Arguments

for the retention of such forms as "labour," "scent," "anchor," "arrive," "ache," might just as reasonably be urged for the continuance of "scituate," "horrour," "chirurgeon," "gulph," and other orthographical curiosities long since departed. Composition is in some respects the least satisfactory subject in our syllabus. With reading it must be taken as the summation and index of the child's literary training. As such, it will be the finished product directly of the English work and indirectly of the whole school programme. In this latter connection we again draw our teachers' attention to the influence of spoken language on this most important branch of our work, for, though common usage has limited the term "composition" to written expression, it must be remembered that it includes oral expression as well. The child's dislike to essay-writing and the want or originality in ideas and their expression appear to be largely due to the voluntary or involuntary attempt to remove the essay in some way from the domain of the pupil's every-day speech. Instruction in essay-writing is too often confined to the correcting of a series of essays. Such a negative method has, of course, its value, but only when it forms the complement to systematic direct teaching. Some of the time now devoted to essay-writing might advantageously be devoted to memorising good prose selections, for here, as in other departments, the child's imitative powers may reasonably be used as an educative factor. Formal grammar practically finds no place as a separate subject in the syllabus as at present constituted, and, though we maintain that it has little or no bearing on the teaching of composition as an art, we are by no means insensible of its value both as a mental exercise and as an aid to the analytical and critical study of language; as such we shall welcome its reappearance in the syllabus in the modified form proposed by the Department. In our report of last year we dealt very fully with the matter of handwriting, and we are satisfied that the subject is receiving its fair share of attention, and that an improvement is taking place throughout the district. We welcome the advent of the *School Journal*, and trust that it will materially assist our teachers in a matter referred to by us in our last report—the question of wider reading. We feel that the journal has been the subject of some unreasonable criticism—a criticism aimed largely at its failure to do many things which cannot fairly be expected from a small monthly publication of necessity limited in form and scope. Whatever it may attempt, we feel its first duty is to provide bright and varied literary matter, more especially matter which is likely to be of importance and interest to the children of the Dominion. The addition of illustrations appears to us to be a matter of consideration if the *Journal* is to compete in interest with the ordinary school magazines and text-books. A matter not altogether unconnected with the *School Journal* is the question of the uniformity of text-books and their issue by the Department. This has been dealt with in a special report already presented to the Board.

Arithmetic.—Our estimate is practically the same as that of last year: Standards I, II, and III, good; Standard IV, satisfactory; Standards V and VI, moderate to fair. We have in previous reports expressed our opinion that, from the points of view of both utility and mental discipline, an exaggerated importance is attached to arithmetic as compared with, say, language. As Sir Oliver Lodge says, "A subject may easily be overtaught, or taught too exclusively and too laboriously." Of the twenty-four hours per week available for the whole syllabus of fourteen subjects, in many cases six hours or even more are devoted to arithmetic, and in the upper standards quite two hours of this time are taken up with long mechanical operations and problems which are beyond the mental grasp of the majority of the pupils. Methods and principles—the true education in arithmetic—are, as we have so often said before, sacrificed by the teacher to "wearisome, over-practice and iteration in examples," for the simple reason that in a written examination principles and methods are invariably subordinated to accuracy in working examples. As a matter of fact the average examination-paper in arithmetic from matriculation downwards might have been set thirty years ago, for all the encouragement given to a rational treatment of the subject. We believe that the requirements in arithmetic for the average Standard V pupil under thirteen years of age are, moreover, out of proportion to his knowledge of written and spoken language. An able educationist of long experience, speaking of the unsatisfactory treatment of this subject, says, "Outside the mechanical operations (addition and subtraction) arithmetic is only a question of interpretation of language, and hence a child's success in the study of it is largely conditioned by his knowledge of language. It is certain that a wider and a deeper study of the language and content of the reading lessons would greatly aid the child in his arithmetic." We entirely agree with this, and should like to see such a reduction in the tests for the upper standards as would enable the subject to be covered by a more reasonable and equitable allocation of the time available.

History and Civics.—We find as a rule children receiving intelligent instruction in the ordinary duties and responsibilities of citizenship. The constitution and functions of the more important local bodies and matters connected with elementary economics are also features in the majority of the programmes of work submitted to us. With regard to history proper we are not able to express the same satisfaction. Too often the programmes are attenuated—not to say "scrappy." The regulations permit history to be taken in alternate years with Course B geography, but we do not think that the omission of a subject from the school course for a whole year is calculated to encourage its comprehensive treatment. In the teaching of no subject do the spirit and ideals of the teacher find more expression than in history, but it is no longer a compulsory subject for the teacher's certificate, and we are concerned to notice the number of young teachers who omit it from their professional course of study, for we fail to see how any one is to appreciate a subject with which he is not familiar. We find the best work done in schools in which the teachers are old-fashioned enough to attach importance to history, not as an examination subject, but as a means of inculcating in their boys and girls those feelings of patriotism and proper national pride which it is quite possible may one day prove as valuable assets to the nation as even its commercial and industrial efficiency.

GEOGRAPHY.—With regard to Course A we have little to add to our remarks of last year. The programmes of work submitted to us are as a rule satisfactory as to matter, and intelligently drawn up, but we have still to impress upon teachers the necessity of paying more attention to the instructions in the syllabus "that the subject should be based as far as possible upon the actual observance of natural phenomena by the children." In the mathematical division of Course A the work has hitherto been of a somewhat feeble nature, but we have much pleasure in welcoming a comprehensive text-book by the Inspector-General which will prove of the greatest assistance to teachers and students in dealing with this rather difficult portion of the subject. In Course B the use of the Geographical Reader alone has not been found altogether satisfactory, and we have found it necessary to require definite programmes, as in the case of Course A.

NATURE-STUDY AND ELEMENTARY SCIENCE.—In our junior classes nature-study is finding increasing favour. A truer appreciation of its value, of its living interest to children, and of its higher aims is enabling many of our teachers to rely less on text-books and to work more along their own lines—this much to their own and their pupils' profit. In many of our infant-rooms we now find the songs, the stories, the drawings, and models all made to centre round the bird, or flower, or insect the little observers have been studying. We need hardly say that co-ordination has its limitations, and these are exceeded when it is no longer purely a means to an end. Elementary agriculture in our country schools now forms the fit and proper complement to the nature-study of the lower standards, though we look forward to the time when the garden takes a more prominent place in the work of the Preparatory classes. The addition of school gardening to the syllabus has entailed a large amount of extra work on country teachers—work willingly undertaken. In the preliminary work of breaking in the ground for school gardens, many committees have rendered invaluable assistance, and we bespeak their further sympathy with the teacher in looking not merely for the husbandman's return of fat crops, but for a return measured only by the larger interests and wider sympathies of the children. We trust that, as the teachers become accustomed to the school garden and its bearing on school-work, the "Craft and Crop" aspect will not obscure the other and no less important side of this work—viz., its bearing on the mental and moral development of the scholar. To quote Mr. Davies, the agricultural instructor, "A matter not entirely foreign to the subject under notice is the care and beautifying of school grounds. Indeed, in America, a country which is generally credited with being beyond all else practical and utilitarian, this feature occupies a leading place in the rural education programme. Is it too much to hope that as one of the results of nature-study the school may become a source of pride and inspiration to the district?" We are in entire accord with Mr. Davies in this matter, and we can assure teachers that both sympathy and practical assistance will not be wanting in any attempt to further so entirely praiseworthy an object. We are, moreover, the more inclined to give prominence to this subject, as during the past year we have been compelled to report in strong terms on the unsatisfactory condition of certain school grounds and offices. During the year instruction in elementary agriculture was provided for such teachers as could arrange to attend at Greytown from April to June, Masterton from July to October, and at Levin during November and December. A similar class at Pahiatua was arranged for, but had to be abandoned owing to the indisposition of the instructor, Mr. Davies. The obvious difficulties in the way of making a Saturday class successful in such a subject as agriculture and the excessive demands made on the time of the teachers attending have induced the Board to adopt this year a system of arranging for a limited number of selected teachers to go into residence at Greytown for a fortnight at a time.

PHYSICAL AND MILITARY DRILL.—Breathing exercises, we are pleased to note, now take a prominent part in the day's work of the large majority of our schools. The few minutes devoted every morning to physical exercises in the open air is quite in accord with our suggestions of last year about the wider bearing of physical culture on the child's every-day life. In the matter of military drill we would refer the Board to the report of the Officer Commanding the Public-school Cadets of the Dominion. So far, however, as this Department affects the actual school-work, we have marked it as very good. Though this is hardly the place for a discussion as to whether the attendance of teachers at battalion drill is or is not compulsory, still, speaking entirely from the point of view of the interests of the schools and the cadets, we think that company drill satisfies all reasonable requirements, and so far as our teachers are concerned, it is very properly treated as a compulsory subject. Battalion drill appears to us to stand on an entirely different footing. It has its very necessary place in any national scheme of military training and defence, more especially in the effective training of officers who may be called upon to handle large bodies of men, but its bearing on the training of the individual cadet does not, in our opinion, justify any action that might jeopardize the success of a cadet system which owes so much of its efficiency to the cheerful and voluntary co-operation of our teachers. The question assumed an unpleasant phase during the year, and, as there seemed some doubt as to the interpretation of the regulations, the Department has been approached with a view to replacing the management of the cadets under the sole control of the Board. If this is agreed to, fresh regulations will be framed which will prevent the recurrence of that friction which is invariably the result of dual authority.

SINGING.—In one-fifth of the schools Grade 0 singing is marked as below satisfactory, and in a few schools it is not taught. In less than one-half is it marked as "good" or "very good," and in these schools most of the teachers in the course of their training have had the benefit of instruction from an expert, and many of them had attended the lessons given by Mr. Parker some years ago. This subject we considered of such vital importance in the schools that it was thought advisable to make such arrangements as would enable our teachers again to have the assistance of an expert. The Board therefore asked Mr. Parker to renew his Saturday classes. These were well attended, and thoroughly appreciated by our teachers. In the course of his report Mr. Parker says, "The lessons covered, so far as was possible in the time at my disposal, the whole ground of elementary school teaching, including proper methods of breathing, quality of voice, sight

reading (time and tune—both notations), ear-training, and school songs. All these subjects were not, of course, exhaustively treated, but each was carried to a certain point, and as thoroughly as possible. The first of them—namely, breathing—has been a good deal talked about lately, but it is no new subject of teaching in Wellington. Twenty years back I was urging its importance in our school-work, and giving precisely the same, or very similar, exercises in the subject. Indeed, I look upon this and the proper use of the voice as the two most important points, both for teachers and pupils, in any well-considered plan of instruction in singing. From the hygienic point of view alone the subject of vocal music in our schools is entitled to far more consideration than is yet given it in New Zealand. By ignorant or careless treatment the voices of our children may be irretrievably spoilt, whereas by sensible and proper training—even within the brief limits allowed to the subject in our school time-tables—the foundations of what may be not only a health-giving exercise but a source of life-long pleasure may be satisfactorily laid. . . . . I think, of all the varied musical work which I am privileged to undertake, this is the most valuable and permanent." Lessons such as these are invaluable to our teachers, and we hope the Board will continue the Wellington class and provide a course for some country centre, such as Masterton.

Manual and Technical.—During the year 116 schools earned capitation under the Manual and Technical Regulations. Nearly all the subjects set down for classes below Standard V were represented, and grants were also earned for such science subjects as agriculture, chemistry, physical measurements, botany, physiology, and "first aid," and also for dressmaking, cookery, woodwork, dairying, swimming, and life-saving.

We are well satisfied with the work done in all these classes, and our opinion has been confirmed by the Department's Technical Inspector, who gave a very satisfactory report on the classes visited by him during the year. Manual work in our schools is improving year by year, but while many of our teachers now realise its proper place in the curriculum, there is certainly evidence that these subjects "have been pushed so hard as to defeat the purpose of scientific education by depriving the pupils of their necessary training in other subjects, and especially in the power of expression in their own language," and we desire to repeat the warning we have given in previous reports that, while "sense-perception and practical work should have a place in any curriculum, that place should not be an exaggerated one." Mr. Howe, who was appointed instructor in woodwork, opened his classes at Thorndon in June, and another centre was opened in Constable Street. A very satisfactory programme was drawn up, and the boys showed great interest and made good progress in the work. As the programme provides for instruction in drawing, we look forward to a great improvement in those branches of this subject which include geometrical and scale drawing. The addition of cookery and woodwork to the subjects of the teachers' examination should give some encouragement to work of this class. Saturday classes for teachers have been established in cookery at Wellington and Masterton, and in drawing and handwork (including woodwork) at Wellington.

Scholarships.—The Board's junior scholarships were awarded on the results of the examination for Junior National Scholarships. The larger schools were fairly well represented, but in the schools with sole teachers, which form a class by themselves, only a few candidates were presented. The raising of the age for the Junior National Scholarships from thirteen to fourteen should have a tendency to extend the benefits of scholarships to schools now poorly represented. For the Senior Scholarships sixty-four candidates sat for examination, and fifty-seven of these succeeded in qualifying for a free place. Scholarships were awarded to the first ten. The list of successful candidates is appended.

Pupil-teachers.—We are pleased to be able to report that the majority of our pupil-teachers had passed the matriculation examination before entering on their apprenticeship, and thus were relieved from the drudgery of passing examinations while engaged in teaching. Only a few were required to sit for the first examination (Civil Service Junior) in December, and all but two succeeded in passing. Three pupil-teachers who failed at the previous examination sent in their resignations during the year.

District High Schools.—As judged by examination results, the secondary classes of the district high schools have been doing very satisfactory work. Many candidates have passed the University examinations for matriculation and solicitors' general knowledge, and in the Civil Service Junior Examination of December thirty-seven candidates under the age of sixteen years succeeded in obtaining the necessary number of marks to qualify for a senior free place, and of those who entered for Senior Board Scholarships only seven failed to obtain the necessary pass. These results are all the more satisfactory in view of the fact that the scholarship-winners, and the best of the scholars who pass out of the primary department, invariably go to the secondary schools. This undoubtedly is the best course for the pupils to pursue, but had these scholars remained in the district high schools the results would probably have been more encouraging to the teachers. In our detailed reports on the secondary classes the work in the various subjects is generally marked from "Satisfactory" to "Very good," but in some of the classes we have found it necessary to call attention to the writing and arrangement of the work. Some of our secondary teachers seem to find a difficulty in realising that it is just as necessary to have neatness and good writing in the secondary classes as in the primary. In previous reports we have pointed out the kind of curriculum suitable for these classes, and we are pleased to notice that in the majority of the programmes submitted to us such subjects as Latin, algebra, and geometry are now made optional, and more prominence is being given to subjects suitable to the environment and nature of the child. The requirements for the Civil Service Examinations have been amended to meet this view, and the addition of elementary agriculture to the matriculation syllabus is a step in the same direction—changes which will make it easier for the secondary teacher to meet examination requirements and provide for practical work at the same time. Masterton, Greytown, Carterton,

Thorndon, and Levin are now equipped with suitable laboratories, and individual work in science is being carried on in these schools. The necessary rooms have not yet been provided at Pahiatua, Hutt, and Petone, but when the difficulties of obtaining accommodation at these places have been overcome we hope to see suitable provision made for practical work for both boys and girls.

The report of an Inspector must necessarily partake somewhat of the unpleasant nature of a "counsel of perfection," and we feel we should be guilty of grave injustice if in our desire to criticize certain weak points in the management of our schools we failed to express our appreciation of the good work done by our teachers as a whole. The Board is fortunate in having in its service as teachers not a few educationists of high standing and long experience, to whom we cheerfully acknowledge our indebtedness for many suggestions and ideas which have proved of advantage to the district generally. It is impossible to be brought into daily contact with the members of the teaching profession without being deeply impressed with the difficulties in which they labour. Within the past few years a great deal has been done to improve their condition in the matters of pay and status, but much more remains to be done. Year by year the importance of education demands that its efficient direction and management should be in the hands not only of highly trained experts and specialists, but of men of high ideals and endowed with exceptional parts and special qualifications; and it is not reasonable to suppose that men of this stamp will be attracted to a profession that asks for so much, yet gives so little in return.

We have, &c.,

T. R. Fleming,
F. H. Bakewell, } Inspectors.
J. S. Tennant,

The Chairman, Education Board, Wellington.

HAWKE'S BAY.

Sir,— Education Office, Napier, 24th January, 1908.

In a brief review of the work done during the past year in the schools of this education district it is difficult to compare one year with another under the old and the present working conditions. Under the old system of regulating examinations and the inspection of schools an Inspector was in close touch with the children in every school of his district, but now he is debarred, if not directly by regulation, certainly by official sentiment from making himself acquainted in any detail with the real working of a school. The head teacher does the examination work and makes promotions, and the central department in Wellington has complete control of all examinations for scholarships, whether Board's, Queen's, or National. So also the examination of pupil-teachers has come under the control of the authorities in Wellington, and the only work that remains as a semblance of the past is the examination of Standard VI pupils for certificates of competency and proficiency. These changes, important as they are, merely modify the arrangements for carrying on the work of education. Just as before, the question remains as to the character of the instruction that is being given in the schools. Have the increased responsibilities of the teachers brought about improved working-conditions? and is the country likely to have a brighter, better, and more intelligent democracy under the newer conditions than was possible under the old? The answer to these questions must be, I think, deferred for the present, and the reason is a simple one. Freedom, under any circumstances, only becomes of value when it can be used beneficially. The freedom to classify and promote children implies skill and training on the part of the teachers, and were all the teachers in the Board's service qualified by training and experience, the responsibilities that the regulations throw upon them would certainly not be misplaced. But a large proportion of the teachers, particularly those in charge of the smaller schools, have never been trained, and in such cases it becomes a difficult matter to decide what ought to be done. Many of the untrained teachers are very earnest in their teaching, and make efforts to carry out the departmental regulations as far as they can; but the inexperienced teacher fails to realise the need of thoroughness in the essential work of a school, and promotions are made much to the detriment of pupils. In the case of the trained teacher, the freedom of classification enjoyed has not been abused to any noticeable extent, and as the responsibilities increase it appears to me that a high standard of work will be maintained in the schools. In the large centres this is to be expected. Competition is an important factor, but, apart from this, a higher standard of duty prevails among the majority of teachers, and the work is done regardless of pass or failure, the aim being the betterment of the children. I wish something could be done for the untrained and inexperienced teachers. The most depressing work one has to do is to visit some of the smaller schools. The teachers in them can hardly be dismissed for incompetency, as it is doubtful whether their places could be filled to better advantage as things are at present. But it is possible to improve them. A month's course of special training in one of the large central schools like Gisborne, Napier, and Hastings would be a public benefit, as it would assist them in placing the smaller schools under better working-conditions, and I trust that something will be done by the Board to carry out the suggestion now made. As showing the disadvantages under which the instruction in the small country school is carried on, it should be stated that not a single pupil in the small schools throughout the district qualified for a scholarship during the past year.

School Districts.—The school districts have not shown any material increase in the school population, and only three new schools were opened. One hundred and one schools were in operation during some part of the school year, but four of them were temporarily closed at the date of the annual visit. The school rolls contained the names of 9,465 pupils at the time of the annual examinations. These represent an increase of 408 pupils compared with the corresponding period of the previous year. Five Catholic schools were also visited and dealt with as in the case of Board

schools. They contained altogether 597 pupils, so that altogether the Inspectors dealt with 10,062 pupils who were returned on the schedules as receiving instruction in accordance with departmental regulations.

The number of teachers in the service of the Board in December was 253. One hundred and fifty of them held certificates of competency from the Department in Wellington, five held a license to teach, forty-five held no certificate, and fifty-three were pupil-teachers who were receiving definite training and instruction in the schools to which they were severally attached.

The school attendance for the year shows only a fair increase. Sickness has been rife in many districts, and a number of the schools were compulsorily closed in consequence of measles, whooping-cough, and other forms of children's ailments.

The losses in salary to teachers by the appearance of an epidemic of sickness or by a run of bad weather cause murmurings which, if not loud, are deep, and it would be a good thing to recognise the principle in the payment of teachers' salaries that no deductions would be made in cases where the falling-off in attendance is the outcome of causes over which the teachers have no control. A regulation having this end in view would be hailed by teachers with much satisfaction.

In the large majority of schools the accommodation is ample for the requirements, and the buildings are in fair repair. The demand for additions and new buildings are few, and a comparatively small expenditure would satisfy the full school needs of the district. It is surprising why no heed has been paid to the frequent applications for accommodation at Mangapapa and Mahora, where the rooms have been overflowing for a long time. It is useless to urge the claims of these districts any longer. Tipapakuku School is full, but the claims are not pressing as at Mangapapa, although the teaching can hardly be effective, as there is a single room in which ninety children are instructed under several teachers. The schools at Woodlands Road, Ngapaeruru, and Rissington are conducted in buildings that are unfitted as places for the instruction of young children, and I would again urge the claims of these districts to consideration.

The growing tendency among settlers to ask for the establishment of a school, and this without a corresponding increase in the school attendance in the district, is to be regretted. One's sympathy must always go out to the settlers in remote places, where, perhaps, three or four children of school age are calling for instruction. As much help as possible should be rendered, but the help will best be given by providing a good school at a reasonable distance, and making a grant towards the maintenance of a horse in cases where riding to school is necessary. The small school is too often the inefficient school, and, although it provides something for the children, it certainly does not provide what can be better provided in other ways.

The condition of the school buildings calls for some notice. The arrangements for painting the buildings are barely keeping pace with the requirements. Perhaps it would be well to employ an additional painter for a time, so that the buildings in the Poverty Bay district could be painted without the withdrawal of the painters from the schools in the southern portion of the district. Whenever the painter visits a school it would be well to arrange for painting the inside and outside of all buildings, and definite tones of colouring should be selected for all inside work. A cheerful schoolroom is the stepping-stone to a cheerful home in the case of many children.

Much of the school furniture is now old, and but few appliances have been supplied for many years. Under the present syllabus of instruction modern appliances are necessary. In some of the older schools the desks are worn out, or are unsuitable for use by senior pupils. Applications have already been made by the Napier North and Hastings Committees for new desks for the upper classes, and, if they are to be supplied, it is advisable that a definite type of single desk be approved for use in schools where refurnishing may be necessary, and in all new buildings. A thousand pounds expended in school apparatus and appliances would barely provide for actual wants in the schools at this time, and no account whatever is taken of the estimated cost of apparatus that is necessary for instruction in elementary physics and chemistry in the larger schools.

The classification of pupils at the date of the annual examination for promotions will be seen in the accompanying table, which gives the roll-number for each standard class, the number present at examination, and the corresponding numbers for 1906.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	101	98	15 0
" VI	574	555	13 9
" V	831	787	13 0
" IV	1,090	1,022	12 3
" III	1,125	1,046	11 1
" II	1,253	1,171	10 1
" I	1,106	1,039	9 7
Preparatory	3,385	2,965	7 2
Totals	9,465	8,683	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

It is now two years since the Board agreed to hold a synchronous examination for all Sixth Standard pupils. Teachers were then instructed to make their annual class promotions in December, instead of at the time of the Inspector's annual visit to a school. These changes were of great

importance in connection with school control and organization. In December, 1906, the first synchronous examination took place, and it met with the hearty support of the teachers. Again, in December last the second examination took place. Registered examination-papers were posted to each centre, and these were supervised by two teachers who had been recommended as qualified by the Teachers' Institute. All arrangements in the local centres were made by the teachers themselves, and the plan has worked exceedingly well. On the 2nd December 544 candidates from sixty of the Board schools and forty-seven candidates belonging to five Catholic schools presented themselves for a certificate of competency or of proficiency in Standard VI requirements. The passes in both grades numbered 533, of which 356 were passes for certificates of proficiency.

The simultaneous examination of pupils from widely separated districts may perhaps possess some disadvantages, but it certainly provides a good opportunity of comparing pupil with pupil, and school with school, that was not possible under the old system of examination. Training, method, and efficiency can easily be estimated, and wide differences were seen in the papers of the candidates. Some of the schools did badly in arithmetic, others in English, and others in geography. The weaknesses were not general, but represented rather the strong and weak points among the teachers. Free classification, it has been urged, is an ideal one for the attainment of sound instruction, but, if such is the case, the relative thoroughness cannot yet be measured by means of examination tests.

The greater freedom enjoyed by teachers in the selection of work and in school control generally is bringing into prominence the fact that the plan of mere paper tests will soon become obsolete. The individual intelligence must be tested in other ways than by written exercises, and a physical and moral balance must be used equally with the mental in determining the best and highest qualities of children. The study of nature, which includes elementary science, also skill in the use of tools, and even physical development, will have to count in determining the "make-up" of a complete training for a girl or boy.

As to thoroughness in the mechanical preparation of subjects of instruction, the present cannot be compared with the past, as far as Hawke's Bay District is concerned. The old plan went in the direction of simplicity; the new aspires to complexity. Under the old there was an ideal, definite and attainable; under the new the schools are groping after something that is termed "wide intelligence," but which is better explained by the term "superficial knowledge." The regulations aim to foster scientific method; but how little is this possible among teachers who are thrown into a wilderness of educational indifference, where too often the school is made to subserve the "bread-and-butter" subjects of the anxious and overworked settler.

Nature-study is making most headway in the junior departments of the larger schools, and it is in these that one often meets with real glimpses of vitality and success in dealing with this interesting and important subject. A recent occurrence will illustrate my point. The junior department in a large school in the southern portion the district has encouraged experimental nature-study for years with considerable success. The instruction is practical, and is carried on in a large measure to train children in habits of observation with reference to animal and plant life in the vicinity of the school. The effect on one of the little girls in P3 class was that she began to keep a school in a small outhouse. She had a number of bottles for her scholars, each with the name of a child in her own class written on a piece of paper and fastened round the neck. She had a shelf which was a model of one in the schoolroom, and held a flower-pot with sweet-peas growing in it, a glass for containing tadpoles, another one with cress and mustard, and another with an onion growing in water. There was a saucer, too, with water in it, and a flourishing carrot-top on it. The little girl hurried home every day to her school, and rehearsed the day's lessons to her scholars. She watched the specimens very carefully, and compared their progress and changes with those in school. "This," says the mistress who sends me the above account, "is the most interesting instance I have noticed, but I know from what the children tell me that many of them try at home to carry out the experiments they see going on in school." And were this plan fostered by teachers, a love of nature would soon spread among the children, and the foundation of true scientific inquiry would be laid.

In quite a number of districts great attention is paid to the flower-garden, but the kitchen-garden has barely received attention. The useful, even in school studies, is supposed to precede the ornamental, and Commitees might well foster the establishment of kitchen-gardens for testing and experimental purposes.

The celebration of Arbor Day was kept in forty-five school districts, and resulted in the planting of about 2,500 trees. In the Poverty Bay district several gentlemen specially interested themselves, and visited a number of the larger schools, so as to give practical lessons in tree-planting and levelling. The lessons were much appreciated by the pupils, and, judging by the papers that were sent to me containing a descriptive account of one of the lessons given, such teaching must prove of high value to the children.

Nature-study is encouraged by this practical instruction in habits of observation, and illustrative lessons of a similar kind might well be fostered by teachers. I should like to see prizes offered by the Board for the best-kept school garden and the best-arranged and best-planted site. Emulation would be fostered in this way, and it would bring into prominence the actual progress of local educational effort year by year.

The woodwork, cookery, and dressmaking classes under the Manual and Technical Regulations have been continued in the schools on the lines set forth in my last year's report. Mr. Gardiner, the instructor in woodwork, has conducted classes in Napier, Hastings, and Dannevirke, as centres. The cookery classes for girls have been carried on in the same places by Misses Millington and Lousley, and Mrs. Thomas has conducted dressmaking classes. In Poverty Bay the instruction in woodwork was given by Mr. Levey. Altogether more than a thousand children received instruction in one or more of the subjects mentioned. Instruction in military drill, with other forms of

physical instruction, is given in all schools where the attendance warrants their being taught. In the smaller schools ordinary school drill is taught along with calisthenic exercises, and generally the results are fairly satisfactory. In the larger centres most of the teachers are Volunteer officers, and military instruction in the schools is well and efficiently given.

The three district high schools were duly inspected and examined, but they cannot be reported as being in a flourishing condition. Hastings is the only one with signs of growing vitality, but the demand for office-lads in Gisborne and farm-lads in Woodville is keeping down the attendance at these schools. Standard VII pupils only numbered 101 in 1907, compared with 134 in 1906. The difference is very marked.

The proposal to establish a district high school at Waipawa is likely to meet with general approval, and, along with the technical buildings lately finished, such a school should satisfy the educational requirements of this growing district for some time.

The character and general tone of the schools—Catholic and Board alike—continue satisfactory. Comparisons are not necessary. Cases of neglect and indifference on the part of teachers are rare. The moral influences are good, and many teachers set before their pupils excellent examples of good living.

My thanks are due to the Board for providing me with help in the work of inspection and examination. As remarked already, more than ten thousand children are attending schools that are open to inspection, and Mr. J. A. Smith's appointment as Assistant Inspector has proved of real help. He commenced duties in April, and already he has been over the larger part of the district. During the coming year we propose visiting fairly often every school where we think it possible to improve the character of the work by a little additional oversight.

Before closing this report I desire to direct attention to the milking industry as carried on in certain districts. There are occasions when it is one's duty to speak on behalf of those who are unable to speak for themselves. No one acquainted with the struggles and hardships of the small settlers would willingly hurt their prospects or hinder them in the production of a single gallon of milk, but if the milking industry cannot be carried on without using and abusing child-labour, the case calls for inquiry. The following is an example among others that might be cited. A family of six children, three boys and three girls, were attending a certain school in March last. Their ages were—girls, 13 years, 11, and 9 respectively; boys, 12 years, 10, and 7; and the daily milking-task was—girl aged 13 milked 10 cows in the morning and 10 in the evening, girl aged 11 milked 10 cows in the morning and 10 in the evening, girl aged 9 milked 9 cows in the morning and 9 in the evening, boy aged 12 milked 11 cows in the morning and 11 in the evening, boy aged 10 milked 11 cows in the morning and 11 in the evening. The youngest boy, aged 7, fetched in the cows, but did no milking. The oldest girl was in Standard IV, and the eldest boy in Standard II. Milking began in the morning at a quarter to 6, and finished at 8. Preparations then began for breakfast and school, and this round of work went on during the spring and summer months. These children had to attend school for five hours daily, and it is not difficult to realise that their progress was slow. Information received from teachers satisfies me that a number of children are being overworked, and attention is drawn to the matter in the hope that the Board will be able to lessen the hardships of children in the direction indicated.

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

The Chairman, Education Board, Hawke's Bay.

MARLBOROUGH.

Sir,— Education Office, Blenheim, January, 1908.

I have the honour to present my fourth annual report on the schools of Marlborough.

Number of Schools.—There were seventy-seven schools on last year's list. Owing to the difficulty in obtaining and retaining teachers, a number of these schools had but a fluctuating existence. Their roll varies from two to seven. They are mostly in the Sounds, where narrow sheep-tracks and steep hillsides render the passage from bay to bay dangerous for young children. Very few are within five miles of each other by track. Centralisation by launch would be costly and not without danger; but as population grows the opportunities for centralisation should also increase. Young teachers, finding the bays remote, do not always care to stay a year; hence many breaks in the work. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, the Board considers it better to recognise the schools, and thus extend to the settlers as much assistance as possible. It is a matter for regret that, with all this inducement, in some localities children are growing up and passing from infancy to youth without ever having had a school in their midst. This is owing to the neglectfulness of the parents and guardians. In last year's report of the Wellington Board it was stated that a number of neglected children were reported to the police, at whose instance they were committed to receiving-homes or industrial schools. It might be well to take some such action in several localities in Marlborough.

Inspection.—Sixty-nine public and five private schools were inspected during the year. A number of supplementary visits were also paid to view the school gardens. In some of the smaller schools the careless keeping of registers is still noticed; the correspondents are enjoined in all cases to see that the registers are carefully marked and preserved, otherwise the payment of capitation is endangered by the absence of a valid basis on which to pay it. By several teachers schemes of work had not been prepared. These are now provided for by the issue from the office of special books, so that there may be no excuse for neglect. A residence has been provided at Ward, and the schools have been wholly or partly rebuilt at Te Awaite and Spring Creek Upper. The most necessary works of the coming year are the repair of Picton School, the provision of more accommoda-

tion at Marlboroughtown and Linkwater, and of a residence at Tuamarina. The lower division in Marlboroughtown has been taught for the greater part of the year in a Sunday-school in the neighbourhood. The teacher at Tuamarina has been put to the utmost inconvenience through the non-provision of residence, and has to journey fourteen miles daily in discharge of his duties. This cannot but prove detrimental to the work. The question of residence has also appeared in other localities, more particularly Grassmere, Linkwater, and Sea View.

School Journal.—The first issue of this periodical came in May, and teachers were instructed to discontinue the use of special histories and geographies, except in Standard VI, in which class a good reference-book for each of these subjects would be required. I found, however, that only well-qualified teachers were able to find in the *Journal* the necessary assistance in teaching these subjects, and I had to advise all in charge of the smaller schools to revert to special text-books. The *Journal* affords a good amount of supplementary reading, and in the hands of a qualified teacher doubtless also supplies sufficient opportunities for introducing the geographical material under Course B. This, however, reveals a double weakness. First, the teacher's interest may not set strongly in that direction; and, secondly, opportunities for revision are not sufficient. In the absence of a text book it is found that without revision little is retained. As for history, an analysis of the topics dealt with in the *Journal* reveals the insufficiency of the provision in that respect. It was suggested that the upper standards should remedy this by reading the *Journals* of the classes below, but the stream of history and the valuable lessons obtainable from watching the sequence of events are lost by an unchronological topical treatment of the subject. Civics was altogether inadequately covered. To do the work at first suggested the magazine would have to be at least doubled in size. As a second reader the *Journal* already supplies a want. It is not so easy as may appear on the surface to obtain a sufficiency of carefully graduated material, and that much effort is put forth by the editor in this direction is evident to all but partial criticism. It would be a decided mistake to do away with the *Journal* before its usefulness has been well tested. There is a cry for free school books and for uniformity of school books. This is the first appreciable instalment of free school books, and if it does away with the cost to each parent of the second readers required by the syllabus it is doubtless a cheap production. Probably on this ground alone the editor could even be given assistance, and the State still save money. Again, the *Journal* enables a certain uniformity to obtain, with nevertheless a progressive change that prevents uniformity from becoming deadening. It also enables facts classed as scientific to be continually brought up to date. Many a good book has become obsolete because its science notes have not been re-edited. In order to persuade a people to undertake a reform, the benefits of the reform are sometimes overstated. Then comes a period of excitement and criticism. We have seen this in another region in respect of the introduction of Commonwealth institutions into Australia. So here, it seems that the *Journal* was expected to do too much; yet in a narrower sphere it has its profitable uses.

Examination.—Sixty-five public and four private schools were examined. There were also held six central examinations for Standard VI. The total enrolment of private schools was 190, and 162 pupils were present at examination.

At public schools the roll-number was 2,065, of whom 1,984 were present. The roll-number increased by thirty-five, and the number present by twenty-two, compared with the previous year. This improvement is also noticeable in the annual averages. The average weekly roll was 2,084, and the average weekly number present 1,763, as compared with 2,029 and 1,730 respectively the previous year.

The following general summary for the district refers to the schools at the times of examination:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	27	26	15 2
" VI	181	175	13 10
" V	244	240	12 8
" IV	256	251	11 11
" III	262	255	10 11
" II	234	225	9 11
" I	232	220	8 10
Preparatory	629	556	7 1
Totals	2,065	1,948	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

At thirty schools every child was present for examination, the largest being Havelock with sixty-eight pupils.

Classification of Schools Examined.—Public schools: Good, 12; satisfactory to good, 10; satisfactory, 21; fair, 17; moderate, 5: total, 65. Private schools: Satisfactory to good, 2; satisfactory, 1; fair, 1: total, 4. The aggregate enrolment of the five schools classed as moderate is thirty-one.

To the 175 pupils present in Standard VI in public schools, eighty-nine certificates of proficiency and forty of competency were awarded. This is a considerable increase on last year, there being a perceptible improvement in the grammar part of composition and in the arithmetic. The percentage of success in the former in Standard VI improved from 43 to 55, and in the latter from

38 to 46. The latter result is especially pleasing. Part of this improvement, was, however, doubtless due to the holding of Standard VI examinations late in the year, which gave from one to three months' extra time for preparation. Forty of those gaining proficiency or competency certificates were in the Sixth Standard for the second year.

In private schools thirteen certificates of proficiency and of competency were awarded. Of these, six proficiency certificates and one competency were awarded to pupils that had been in Standard VI for two years.

ATTENDANCE.—In 1906 the average for the colony was 86·9 per cent., and for Marlborough 85·3. The year 1907 showed a falling-off, the average for Marlborough being only 84·6. In part the fall may have been owing to epidemics of measles, whooping-cough, and diphtheritic throat. But these do not account for all, since they were most prevalent during the latter part of the year, whereas the quarterly averages were 84·8, 83·9, 85·6, and 84 per cent. respectively. It is evident the truant-officer's hands require strengthening. During the year instructions were issued to head teachers around Blenheim to give the officer full lists of absentees not complying with the requirements of the Act. The teachers may render aid in other ways. Sometimes attendance certificates have been earned by the children but not applied for. These should be looked forward to as valuable prizes. They are certainly important recommendations to youths applying for situations. In various districts supplementary inducements are offered in the way of book prizes, special honours to the best class each week, drawing graphs of attendance on the wall of each class-room, &c. It does not take much to stir emulation in children. Mr. Bird, Inspector of Native Schools, reports that at a Native school, with less than thirty pupils on the roll, twelve first-class and five second-class attendance certificates were granted. The attendance at our chief town having been so low for so many years, it may be worth explaining that a first-class certificate is awarded to all children present every half-day on which the school is open, and a second-class to those that do not miss more than five half-days. Summary of truant officer's report: Number of informations, not recorded; convictions, 21.

At the close of the year we had only five certificated sole teachers, as compared with ten last year, and fifty uncertificated, as compared with forty. The training colleges are not yet working up to their complement. Inasmuch as practically every district is crying out for certificated teachers, it appears that there are barely sufficient of these institutions. Since 1903 the number of certificated teachers in the colony has dwindled from 2,482 to 2,418 at the end of 1906. In the same way the uncertificated have increased from 546 to 789. In addition to the above, there is one instructor in cookery and one in woodwork, and this Board shares with three others the services of one instructor in agriculture. Of the seven pupil-teachers, five had some qualification beyond Standard VI. A few of the uncertificated teachers were similarly qualified — Partial D, Matriculation, or Civil Service Junior. Regulation 5, Examination and Classification of Teachers, bears harshly on the teachers in our small schools: "No teacher shall be classified until he has taught for two years in a school with an average attendance of not less than sixteen." Such a minimum school would probably have a roll of twenty pupils scattered throughout all the standards. Many authorities consider thirty is the minimum number a teacher should have in his sole charge. It appears therefore that the line might have been drawn lower down. There are forty-four schools in Marlborough whose teachers are considered as not gaining any experience in their present employment; the Board therefore joined with Nelson in protesting vigorously against the above-mentioned regulation.

During 1907 two conferences of educational authorities were held in Wellington—a Conference of Inspectors of Schools and a Conference of Principals of Training Colleges and Members of Boards of Advice. A remit from the former received scant attention at the hands of the latter. The remit was, "That the Training College Conference be asked to take the question of the training of unclassified teachers into favourable consideration." Result: "No action was taken." Evidently this Conference required the presence of Inspectors from districts where the small schools are relatively numerous. At present we are dependent on sporadic action of the governing authorities of the training colleges. It is due to the Board and to the Principal of the Wellington Training College, Mr. Gray, to mention their efforts to do something in this matter by gathering a class of country teachers in Wellington for three weeks' special tuition. This gathering was held in July–August last year, and proved so successful that I hope to see the experiment renewed. A middle course suggested by the Otago Board may commend itself to the Department—namely, "Should any such teacher succeed in qualifying for a certificate arrangements should be made for giving him three or six months' training and some allowance for support."

READING.—The readers generally in use are "The Imperial" and the *School Journal*. The upper standards obtain a considerable amount of extra reading by perusing the *Journals* in the lower classes. These are generally interesting enough to prove attractive, and the fact that the language is simpler does not detract from their merit. Reading has been defined in two ways. Under the first the mere mechanic art of reading is alone considered; under the second come the reading and general treatment of a passage, so as to show both an appreciation of the thought and sympathy with the writer. Young teachers need to be reminded that the former sometimes degenerates into mere eye reading—a vicious scanning of the words without having the meaning penetrate the brain. The latter cannot be obtained without a considerable amount of paraphrasing by teacher and pupil, and this leads to studies in word-building, dictation, and forms of expression. It is to emphasize the necessity for this continual progression from reading to explanation (oral and written composition), and thence to studies in the craftsmanship of literature, in spelling and word-building, and memorising of the beautiful when clearly conceived—it is apparently from these considerations that the syllabus sums up reading, spelling, writing, composition, and recitation, and calls them all "English." In all schools a good dictionary should be found. Ogilvie's Shilling Dictionary is probably the best for its size. The chief defect noticed during the year

was a tendency "to race," with the consequent imperfect enunciation and neglect of the phrasal accent. There was a relatively small percentage of failure in this subject, but the schools in which the reading was classed as "excellent" were few.

SPELLING.—Part of the spelling is judged in connection with composition—*e.g.*, the use of *there, their; were, where; as, has; to, two, too;* and the use of the apostrophe. I noticed in several instances spelling tests in exercise-books with several unmarked errors—a serious fault which indicates imperfect supervision. By leaving the pupil's error uncorrected the mistake is harder to remedy, for in a subject that depends largely on eye and ear a false collocation has been set up and allowed time to establish itself. The exercises in word-building make this subject more attractive. In some quarters, however, this is limited to the mere spelling of the built word without use of it in a sentence. This may certainly obtain correct spelling and an apparent saving in time; but the saving is only apparent. By using the word in a sentence it becomes an instrument of thought, and thus both formal and material considerations receive due weight; spelling becomes correlated with composition; the lesson becomes an exercise in both subjects; each subject at once throws light on the other, and adds to its interest. This is a great gain.

WRITING.—In most schools copybook writing is satisfactory, and in many it is very good. General writing on slates, or in notebooks, in a good many instances receives less attention than it should. In several schools the time allowed for writing was too short to admit of teaching properly the forms of the letters. Every letter has its characteristic errors, and these should be incessantly illustrated and corrected on the blackboard—exaggerated if necessary—until they cease to appear. If one may judge by their own handwriting a number of young teachers and prospective teachers have an inadequate idea of the importance of this subject. In two of the larger schools this class of work improved considerably during the year. Even the children can appreciate improvement in a mechanic art like this. They find that thoroughness wins in the end, and so habits are formed that have pleasant reflexes in the discipline and tone of the schools.

COMPOSITION.—A remark made above has a bearing on the observed treatment of this subject. Sometimes I was shown work done by the pupils on which promotion was to be based, and in which questions relating to clauses and phrases were either carelessly or ignorantly allowed marks, although quite wrong. The results in composition were least gratifying last year, and I expected improvement. In this I was not disappointed, but, considering that the Board has supplied free the complete English tests for the last three years, there is still a very great weakness in grammar. I hope to see the difficulties under this head grappled with earnestly during the current year. In the syllabus the use of the terms "subject," "predicate," &c., is discouraged in the lower standards. The trouble that used to present itself to the teacher was not so much in the use of these names as in the request for the definition of them. A precise definition sometimes calls for a faculty of abstraction with which the child is ill equipped. The use of roundabout phraseology for *subject* and *predicate* simply presents this difficulty in a new form. A child may have a working idea of a "subject" and a "predicate" just as he may have of a "kangaroo" and a "rhinoceros" without being able to give in the language of logic or of zoology the connotation of the terms, and as their use conduces to conciseness of expression and a focussing of the attention it seems advisable to employ them. Free oral discussion, of which our American friends make so much use, is not yet a strong feature of the composition lesson in our schools. Some teachers are still satisfied with very short essays.

ARITHMETIC.—In dealing with this subject there are two bad methods in vogue: (1.) The teacher tends to lecture too much. There is a tremendous difference between the teacher's telling the class how to work a sum and the class's telling the teacher. The teacher's lecture may be a necessary preliminary, but some imagine the subject has been taught when so much is accomplished. As a matter of fact that is only the groundwork, even though in the course of it a number of sums have been worked completely through. American teachers use the word "recitation," not meaning the repetition of poetry, but as a lesson of questioning and free oral discussion on any subject. The pupil takes his full share in the questioning and discussion, and the teacher does not feel put out thereby. Hence there is the recitation lesson in history, the recitation of geography, the recitation of arithmetic. This aspect of the arithmetic lesson needs development. The pupil knows his subject when he can explain it to the teacher. He may know very little of it if the only stage accomplished is the teacher's explanation to the pupil. The teacher is recommended to read Professor Adams on the difference between "judging" and "thinking," p. 100, "Herbartian Psychology applied to Education"; D. Heath, London; 3/6. (2.) Sufficient use is not made of the concrete. How many teachers take forth their children to measure a chain, a furlong, a mile, an acre, an acre in different shapes, similarly with the metric and other measurements. There is a subject on the Manual and Technical Syllabus, "Elementary Physical Measurements" (see also School Syllabus, paragraph 55). The portion of this that constitutes concrete arithmetic might well be introduced into the syllabus of that subject. The teacher must, however, remember that the concrete presentation of his subject is useful only as it leads up to the abstract—*e.g.*, in Class II, "A boy places in his empty pocket 6 marbles, and then 5 more: how many are there is his pocket altogether?" This lesson is not finished till the pupil understands that six and five make eleven, irrespective of marbles. The concrete is the type of lesson at inspection. The abstract is the type at examination. The latter should have been arrived at through the former. Unless there is a continual recourse to the real the imagination of the child is apt to run away at unexpected tangents —*e.g.*, in the history lesson a girl told me "The Black Hole of Calcutta had a window that was no bigger than a penny postage-stamp." In Standard I the teacher need not treat of numbers proceeding beyond 100. By one education journal circulating in New Zealand and containing examination tests this fact is overlooked. There is sufficient scope within the limit of 100 to give the teacher a full year's work. So, too, within the number 1,000 for Standard II, with money sums up to £20. In some schools the liberty to use a classification in arithmetic different from that adopted in English is availed of rather too freely. This leads to difficulties in Standard VI.

The Standard VI schedule is not altogether satisfactory. Pupils recently promoted to that standard either in their own schools, or in schools of another district where the time of examination is different from that of the school to which they have migrated, are not necessarily candidates either for proficiency or competency in Standard VI. A number of the smaller schools improved in arithmetic, and the general standard at the time of the central Standard VI examinations was considerably higher than the experience of the previous year.

Geography.—This is one of the most disappointing subjects in respect of both Course A and Course B. The former comprises physical and methematical geography and nature-study. The latter is human geography. It is very difficult to get Course A treated fully at first hand. Certain books have been published dealing with this part of the subject. While these are suggestive they also tend to be informative, and this leads the teacher back into making the subject bookish. The following answer to a question under Course B, geography, illustrates the difference between real and bookish geography: "Kerosene comes from the United States. Kerosene that we use comes from Havelock." A useful little booklet by Gibson, of Auckland, "Elementary Weather Studies," keeps closer to the ideal, but is limited to the study of atmospheric phenomena. For general suggestiveness Huxley and Gregory's "Physiography" is recommended. Mathematical geography is rarely satisfactory. A large part of nature-study comes under Course A. Its special province is to cultivate a love of nature and a natural alertness. It supplies the material for "object-lessons," which are compulsory under the Act. The training of the observation may certainly be made by means of books—when books take the form of pictures. To repeat an admonition that can bear repetition, each teacher should take a collection of pictures showing typical river-beds, mountains, plains, delta-fans, glaciers, sea-beaches, &c. These are continually appearing in the illustrated papers and on post-cards. Professor Herbertson, of Oxford, says, that "if a headmaster cannot plan the work of his school so as to allow a reasonable number of occasions for outdoor geography he is not fit to be a headmaster." This is the language of the specialist emphasizing his point; nevertheless it indicates the more strenuous advocacy of the claims of geography as a science of observation. Elsewhere he says, "Little and often is a good motto. A small area frequently visited and intimately known comes at last to be understood as a whole. In geography, as in other things, it is a surer sign of education to discover more and more in the familiar than to be impressed chiefly by the unfamiliar." Much more may be made of scale geography, one aspect of which is the judging of the relative sizes and distances of rivers, lakes, countries, before a map of the world. As for Course B, it was thought that by adopting the principles of Jacotot, the *School Journal* would suffice. It is found in practice that however the experienced teacher may succeed without a text-book, the less experienced finds the book practically essential. Therefore, while the better-qualified teachers are given liberty to do without a special text, I have found it advisable to recommend definite geographical readers to others. Whitcombe and Tombs's Geographical Readers appear the most suitable at present. Moreover, teachers of Standards III and IV are enjoined when dealing with Course B to give the major portion of their attention to the geography of New Zealand.

Teachers already very frequently use pictures in illustration of Course B. The Exhibition number of the Christchurch *Press* has proved very useful in illustrating the towns of New Zealand. More may be made of the New Zealand Year-book. From its nature it tends to make geography a living subject. The good teacher gathers up the dry statistics as the prism gathers the common light of day, and sets them forth in beautiful and interesting collocations. Bartholomew's Atlas of the World's Commerce (15s.; Longmans) would prove of great use in every schoolroom. It costs just the same as one large wall-map, so the Board may consider the advisability of supplying a copy to at least each graded school.

Much more variety may be introduced into the maps drawn. Maps of the following types may be mentioned: Orographical (showing altitude), rocks and soils, minerals, the major natural regions, vegetation and crops, arable and pasture land, climate, wind, rainfall, temperature, seasons, distribution of water, currents, animals, distribution of races, languages, density of population, political, occupations, railways, canals, roads, trade-routes by land and sea, telegraphs, religions. These require to be studied in connection with one another, and the connection with man should be emphasized throughout. In Standard VII political, social, and economic maps of various kinds may be formed, bringing out especially the physical basis.

In modern times geography, as the link between the humanities and science, is making great claims, and in such a university as Oxford it is now recognised as a subject for a pass degree, and so too in the other leading universities of England. Rightly used, geography is a corrective to history. The patriotism inspired by the latter tends to be narrow. The former sets forth the physical basis underlying differences of race, language, and custom, proves that these are not fixed, and so presents a ground for a mutual understanding of different peoples.

Drawing.—During 1908 I shall look for improvement in scale, geometric, and model drawing. Many schools are doing nature study and object-drawing. At present some of the examples are simple for the standard, but the schools where nature-study drawing has been practised for some time are gradually realising the stage required, and some presentable work has been produced, both by brush and by pencil. More designing is possible with the rectilineal elements prescribed for Standards I and II. Books by Lydon and Spanton contain useful illustrations. In several small schools the correlation of drawing and composition has been successfully attempted. The classes attending the Technical School have made considerable progress in correlating drawing and woodwork. Booklets on design published by Fountain Barber, of Christchurch, have been found useful.

History.—As with geography, so with history: it has been found inadvisable to do without a text-book. The syllabus presents a scheme of lessons to be covered in the four standards, III to VI, and the use of the *School Journal* alone would apparently leave the field far from exhausted.

In any case, by the method adopted in the *Journal* the sequence of history is lost and civics receives inadequate treatment. Arnold Foster's Citizen Reader, New Zealand edition, gives in interesting fashion much of what is called "Civics." Tombs's Almanack (Whitcombe and Tombs; 1s.) is also a good publication, summing up a number of enactments that it is useful for the child to know, especially concerning local bodies and their constitution, and so revealing in some measure the social web that gathers each citizen in its mesh. Empire Day celebrations were postponed to the 3rd June, when they were held with much ceremony at Springlands, where the children assembled from most of the schools on the Wairau Plain, and spent what would be to them a memorable day. The Dominion Day Proclamation and Sir Joseph Ward's message to the people have also gone forth to the schools.

Thanks are due to the Department for the distribution of a series of battle-pictures.

Singing.—Fifty-five schools made more or less successful attempts at this subject. Comparatively few were able to treat a part-song effectively. In the smaller schools I was satisfied with a few simple songs nicely rendered. The Pythagoreans had an idea that as the thunderstorm purges the heavy atmosphere of its glooms, so, by a natural physiological reaction on the mind, singing clears away worries and vague uneasinesses that tend to accumulate. We say, "So-and-so worries; he is downhearted." Pythagoras would say, "Let him sing, and the air will assume a brightness and sparkle he had not noticed before." There are sound reasons, apart from the action of the lungs, why the teacher should intersperse his day with brief snatches of song.

Needlework. — In the larger schools round Blenheim needlework was taught in the upper standards only when the cookery class was not operating; but in general the work shown was highly satisfactory. The cutting-out in Standard VI was not so successful. A few schools devoted too much time to one stitch, and failed to show examples of all the kinds of work prescribed. This is a species of manual work with its own objects. One of the ends is to familiarise the pupils with various uses of the needle. This is educational, and is best attained by making a sampler. Should time then remain it may be devoted to the utilitarian object of providing specific garments.

Moral Instruction.—It is somewhat difficult to gauge what is being done under this head, as it does not appear on the school time-table; but the tone and discipline are satisfactory, and since moral instruction, whether detailed or casual, is one of the most effective instruments of discipline, there seems little reason to doubt that the teachers are constantly placing before the children its chief lessons. A good teacher will look on any of his pupils who goes astray as one of his failures, and he will sum up his successes not only by examination, but also by the number of his pupils who become striking examples of good citizenship. Mr. Stetson, Superintendent of the schools of Maine, says that the well-trained pupil looks on duty as opportunity. The teaching of this aspect may be commended to the teachers.

Health.—This subject is apt to be overlooked or treated in a very cursory fashion, so teachers are reminded that instruction under this head is mandatory. The more extended use of breathing exercises in the drill has given an additional nucleus for lessons of this kind. The *School Journal* does good work by introducing topics specially bearing on this subject and on the one mentioned above.

Recitation.—In fifty-one schools recitation was dealt with satisfactorily. The others either failed to prepare a sufficiency of verses, or to memorise faithfully, or to show that the thought was understood. Only four schools were accounted excellent. The chief failings were the want of phrasing, of modulation, and especially of dramatic force. In the upper standards there is probably no lesson that can be made more interesting in the hands of teachers gifted with imagination, with a sense of poetic diction, and an appropriate knowledge of the history of words, such as may be learned from Archbishop Trench's works. There is required also an understanding of figurative language, of the echoing of sound and sense, and of concise expression. Elocution becomes comparatively simple when the above conditions are met. There is comparatively little difference between good reading aloud and good recitation. The freedom from the printed word, however, leaves open the possibility of a more exquisite interpretation. In the lower standards all that is required of the children is a sympathetic rendering of pieces embodying thoughts well within their range, but the teacher may be more careful than he frequently is in seeing that the poems are, in their simple way, models of tasteful expression.

Drill.—There are cadet companies in connection with most of the larger schools, and they preserve a highly satisfactory degree of efficiency. Only two small schools, comprising eight children in all, failed to prepare the children in this subject. In both schools the teachers were in charge of schools for the first time. In thirty-five schools the drill was considered "good"—that is to say, the exercises were strenuous and quick, and attention was given to posture and to breathing. Breathing exercises are practised in nearly all schools, and already the narrow-chested boy is beginning to disappear. In a few cases the breathing exercises were taken in school, or boys went through them with coats tightly buttoned. These matters need remedying. Of the 235 cadets in the district, 147 visited the Exhibition held in Christchurch, with manifest advantage. The fact that shooting is made compulsory in order to earn capitation should tend to improvement. The interest shown by a number of local gentlemen in the doings of the corps gives an additional stimulus. Mr. J. C. Chaytor during the past year, with his wonted generosity, gave £105 to provide five annual prizes for shooting, and Mr. Nosworthy presented a handsome champion belt for competition. That these have produced some effect is evidenced by the position of two of our boys, who in the class firing gained eighth and ninth places for the colony. Four of the Chaytor prizes were captured this year by the North Marlborough Cadet Company. The remaining one went to Picton. Dr. Thomas, reporting on the Exhibition camp, suggests that all cadets should be taught first aid. The suggestion may be commended to those in charge.

Now that the cadets are under an officer of the Department the time is ripe for reorganization in a number of respects, such as audit, promotion of officers, inventory of goods, scheduling and

distributing information concerning cost of goods, capitation, supply of ammunition, registration, distribution of all literature to Education Offices, codification of regulations, &c.

HANDWORK.—In forty-four schools handwork of some description was undertaken. Plasticine modelling, crayon-work, brush drawing, bricklaying, tablet-designing, beadwork, carton-work, paper-folding, paper-cutting, blackboard drawing, gardening, physiology and first aid, cookery, woodwork, swimming. Gardening and brush drawing appear to be most interesting. Including eight gardens at private institutions, there are thirty-five school gardens in the district; some of these are as yet in their infancy. I feel sure they would improve and prosper if we could have more of the services of Mr. Bruce, our expert in agriculture. The result of our present poor resources is that Mr. Bruce is forced into a wasteful system of travelling over four education districts, wherein his energies are dissipated in the mere act of locomotion. The fact that he is able to do so much as he has accomplished is greatly to his credit. Large centres and small centres are all given the same capitation in cookery and woodwork. Even so, the cities of Auckland and Christchurch appear to be forced to make the children contribute 3s. per annum for cookery and 2s. for woodwork. If that is the experience of the larger towns, it may be imagined that the treasurer of a small district has no sinecure. This Board has hitherto maintained these classes free, but it may yet require to make a charge similar to that of the larger centres.

(*a.*) *Elementary Handwork.*—In plasticine modelling several schools showed more freedom and delicacy, and also more variety, as if the teachers directed less and supervised more, thus giving individuality freedom to develop.

Designing in colours is improving.

Brush drawing: As with the plasticine, more variety of treatment has developed, flat tinting, geometric design, and nature-study showing advancement.

Bricklaying deserves more attention than it receives, comparatively few teachers appearing yet to appreciate the capacity for correlation with oral composition, plans and elevations in drawing, fractional and cubic measure and mensuration in arithmetic, elementary geometry, &c., that lie hidden in these harmless-looking blocks.

Tablet-designing, beadwork, carton-work, paper-folding, paper-cutting, and blackboard drawing are not taught in many schools, but in several of these subjects very good work is produced by a few classes.

Swimming has been taught at two schools, but capitation has not been claimed thereon, the registration not having been systematic. One head teacher says all his boys can swim. It would give them encouragement if he issued to them certificates as to the distance they can cover. This has proved a successful measure elsewhere. The Auckland Board gives the teacher of swimming three-fourths of the capitation. I recommend a trial of this species of encouragement.

Physiology and first aid is not widely taught. The higher standards of the larger schools attend classes in woodwork and cookery. In some schools again the subject is discontinued for a year and then resumed.

Gardening: This is greatly encouraged by prizes offered by various local bodies. During the past year several gardens have increased in area, and improved in the measures adopted for comparing results.

Woodwork and cookery: The schools in and around Blenheim, from as far away as Picton, sent pupils to these classes. The aggregate roll at school classes was 256, and the average number present 183.

Registration: The registration in respect of some of these classes is very cumbersome, and is probably not a whit more effective than the ordinary school registration. In regard to school classes, except possibly those held in buildings away from their schools, there appears no reason why the ordinary school register should not be sufficient. Of late there is a tendency to make matters more complicated still, which means an enormous increase in the work in the office, as well as in the school.

Needlework was taught as handwork in two schools in charge of sole teachers. In these cases special teachers were employed.

(*b.*) *Teachers' Classes.*—Cookery: The average attendance was disappointing. It will probably improve during 1908 owing to the success of the candidates who sat for certificates from the City and Guilds of London Institute. Four candidates entered. One gained a first-class diploma and three gained second-class awards.

Practical agriculture and agricultural chemistry: After the receipt of a grant for apparatus and material this class made good headway, and should prove very sucessful during 1908.

A class in singing was also held. Under the amending Education Act of last session this class may now operate as a continuation class.

Owing to the departure of our instructress and difficulties in the way of arranging for a successor, our class in dressmaking did not proceed.

(*c.*) *Technical and Continuation Classes.*—Classes were held in Blenheim in English, arithmetic, shorthand, book-keeping, woodwork, and cookery. The upper pupils of private schools round Blenheim were formed into technical classes in cookery and woodwork. At Canvastown classes were held in English, arithmetic, commercial arithmetic, commercial geography, and book-keeping.

Owing to changes in the staff the classes in Havelock did not proceed. Classes were instituted at Picton in English, arithmetic, and brush drawing. A number of pupils in these classes, held during 1906, passed the examination for Civil Service Junior and Civil Service Senior, in whole or part.

Marlborough High School provided classes in woodwork and cookery.

The total enrolment at cookery and woodwork classes of all descriptions were 209 and 152 respectively—total, 361. The average attendance was 139 and 112. In estimating these attendances it must be remembered that they include pupils some of whom have to walk two miles from

their school to the technical school, others come by train eighteen miles, and still others are country teachers, who have more or fewer miles to traverse before reaching the train.

The estimated capitation is £300 on all classes.

We propose to hold a wood-carving and, if possible, a model-drawing class during 1908.

Thanks are due to the following for assistance during the past year: Blenheim Borough Council, for use of gas-stove; Mr. A. McCallum, donation of flour; Messrs. Bythell and Wemyss, for donations of timber.

Mr. Bruce was granted leave to attend the Conference of Experts in Agriculture held in Wellington during the year. He took the opportunity to urge on the Department the claims of his district for assistance, and a substantial grant for chemicals and apparatus was the result.

STANDARD VII.—Nine schools had pupils of this grade, the total roll being twenty-seven. Of these twenty-six were present. Examinations held by me in Standard VII are understood to be simply progress examinations to the Civil Service Junior, the Standard VII pass being success in that examination. The head teachers of country schools who have pupils continuing at school beyond Standard VI find that better work is done when this definite proposal is set before them.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—"The Education Act Amendment Act, 1907," does away with Queen's Scholarships. The result is that Marlborough loses her chance of gaining these valuable scholarships, and receives no compensation. The competition goes to the larger districts, which have the number of Junior National Scholarships to which they are entitled increased. The fact that one of our pupils qualified in 1906 for a Queen's Scholarship proves that the loss is not imaginary.

The Junior National Scholarship age-limit has been advanced to fourteen years, the papers being on the subjects of the Sixth Standard. The offering of university bursaries to all that gain "credit" on Junior University Scholarship papers is a pleasing step towards free education in the higher branches.

That University Bursaries, Senior Queen's Scholarships, and Junior University Scholarships are all awarded on a test in which 1,500 marks are assigned to Latin, and only 600 to any such science as chemistry, is an anomaly. Of course, if Latin is reckoned to be worth two and a half sciences each science will be practically starved. The influence of this test reaches down to the primary school, and tends to undermine the most striking proposals in our syllabus. I do not think it advisable to give 1,500 marks to each science and 600 to Latin, but if that were done in this test the practical sciences would receive a stimulus that would be felt from end to end of these Islands.

Maine, in the United States, has a primary-school population of 132,415, and 13,450 are enrolled in free high schools. New Zealand has a primary-school population of 139,302, and 5,364 are obtaining free secondary tuition. Thus one State gives free higher education to about three pupils to our one, and glories in the fact that an unusual number of eminent men have graduated from its schools.

THE PUPIL-TEACHERS.—All the pupil-teachers that sat for examination succeeded in satisfying the examiners. It appears, however, that the instruction in practical work will not be entirely satisfactory till some direct reward is proposed to those on whom the duty of instruction falls.

In the State of Maine, America, they have what is called a School Improvement League. Committees enrolled under this are emulous to make their school the best in the country. They endow it with books, book-cases, apparatus, and the most approved furniture. They paint the walls in attractive tints, and adorn the rooms with statuary and pictures. They beautify the grounds. They consider it would be a misfortune to have some person of wealth contribute the entire sum necessary to make the improvements. Outgoing pupils are encouraged to leave some memento—a picture, a bust, &c. Finally, "No town should commence the work of school-improvement and then keep so still about it that no other town may profit thereby." In New Zealand the inhabitants of our cities take pride in rearing handsome buildings, laying out public gardens, and adorning the town with statuary. In the country the people and committees might begin on the chief public building—the school. We shall be pleased to hear of the results of their efforts.

MR. SMITH'S RETIREMENT.—In 1890 he was called to Marlborough as Inspector and Secretary, offices which he held till 1904, when the warnings of age led him to lay aside the inspectorate. He continued, however, in the secretaryship until May of last year (1907), when he retired on superannuation. He brought to his work a sound common-sense, a saving grace of humour, an ever-ripening experience, and a uniform courtesy. As one who was his colleague in office during three and a half years, I wish him many seasons of autumntide—a wish that is tempered only by regret that the Superannuation Act allows emoluments so small as to make his pathway only raggedly smooth.

I gratefully acknowledge the general earnestness displayed by the teachers in their labours of the past year.

D. A. STRACHAN, Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Marlborough.

NELSON.

SIR,— Education Office, Nelson.

We have the honour to present our annual report on the schools of the Nelson Educational District for the year 1907.

One hundred and sixteen schools, six more than the number recorded last year, were at work during the last quarter of the present year. Nine new household schools have been established, but three others have ceased to exist. Some recently opened schools have not yet been examined by us, and through Matiri being closed at the time of the Inspector's visit the pupils failed to attend examination, so that the total number of schools examined is 108.

As usual, the following schools, not under the control of the Board, have also been examined: Miss Hooper's, Nelson (17 pupils); Preparatory Division, &c., Nelson College (19); Nelson Girls' College (18); Cabragh House, Nelson (10); St. Canice's, Westport (165); Sacred Heart, Reefton (98); St. Mary's, Nelson (129). The total number of scholars was 457, of whom 441 were present. The work of these schools was summarised as follows: In the case of three of them, good; of one, satisfactory to good; of one, satisfactory; and of two, fair to satisfactory.

Four special examinations were held at different times, and nineteen candidates presented themselves, one for Standard V competency, and the other for Standard VI proficiency certificates. At these examinations sixteen certificates were gained—seven proficiency, eight competency Standard VI, and one competency Standard V.

One hundred public and six private schools were inspected by us during the early part of the school year. On the occasion of our visits of inspection we have frequently had to complain of the incompleteness of some of the time-tables in use. This has been the case mostly in the smaller schools, where the chief fault has been the absence of a summary to the time-table. Frequently we have found the work going on under a time-table that evidently was suited only to some former condition of the school, while in other cases there was a decided departure from the routine of work laid down.

A rather general weakness in the teaching was the lack of sufficient blackboard demonstration. We cannot too strongly impress upon our teachers, especially upon those of limited experience, the idea that a most powerful aid may be supplied by the blackboard. A further defect was the absence of well-laid-out schemes of work, which are supposed to be drawn up for each term or quarter. During the coming year we expect to see a more general adherence to the requirements under this head.

The average weekly number on the rolls for September quarter was 5,606, eleven higher than for the corresponding quarter of last year. At the time of our examinations the number on the rolls was 5,564, and owing to the prevalence of epidemics, especially of influenza, only 5,211 were present. Here, as well as in other parts of the Dominion, the same cause has largely affected the average attendance for the year, which in this district has fallen from 86·4 per cent. (1906) of the average weekly number on the rolls to 83·7 per cent.

In regard to attendance there is another aspect of the question, to which we have previously referred and to which in another district attention has been more than once directed, and that is the shortening of the school year. The Board's by-laws strictly define the length of vacation to be given throughout the school year, and including the odd days specified the whole amount is exactly nine weeks. Should Committees desire to deviate from the fixed holidays the consent of the Board must first be obtained (By-law 46).

If, then, any extra single holidays are allowed for exceptional circumstances arising in connection with certain schools, these should not reasonably total more than an extra week in all. This leaves as a minimum number of weeks forty-two, or 420 half-days, on which every school should be open. Now, an examination of last year's quarterly returns shows that only nineteen of our 116 schools did their duty in this respect by being open 420 times in the school year. One was open 470 times, whilst fifty-two were not open even 400 times, and one of these for which we can find no reasonable excuse was open only 360 times. Unless the children are given reasonable opportunities, they cannot be expected to obtain the full benefit of the many advantages now extended to them under our educational system, and we contend that it is not unreasonable to demand that the school should be open 420 times, when we consider that this allows of ten weeks' holiday in the year in addition to the full Saturday every week. We admit that, owing to epidemics, this has been an exceptional year, but in the interests of the children we would plead with Committees, upon whom the chief responsibility rests, to see that in future the children under their charge are not deprived of their just rights, in being denied, upon frivolous pretexts, opportunities for improvement.

The addition of more uncertificated teachers is due to the opening of several new household schools, so that though the proportion of certificated teachers is absolutely less, many of those already holding certificates have, particularly in competition for C certificates, made a decided advance in the direction of improvement of status.

Twenty-six pupil-teachers were also employed and of these three are certificated and one has passed the examination.

The following summary of results for the whole district is an extract from the Inspector's annual return:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	131	108	14 11
" VI	454	443	13 9
" V	549	522	12 10
" IV	658	633	11 11
" III	640	622	10 11
" II	626	608	9 10
" I	647	624	8 11
Preparatory	1,859	1,651	6 11
Totals	5,564	5,211	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

Standards III and VI are smaller this year by fifty-one and thirty-six respectively, but Standards V and VII are larger by thirty and twenty-eight respectively. Other classes show less variation. The increase in numbers in Standard VII is largely the result of a formation of Lower Takaka into a district high school with a roll-number of twenty-four in the secondary class, which in spite of satisfactory numbers has had in working to be content with a very limited space in the hired room temporarily provided. When the new class-room now in course of erection is completed, working-conditions will be much more favourable. We are pleased to note here that a Reefton winner of one of the two scholarships annually offered by the Nelson College Governors to pupils of our secondary classes who are under sixteen years of age has attained before entry a higher status than any previous scholarship-winner, as she has passed the Matriculation Examination.

The mean of average age as shown above is slightly higher this year—11 years 3 months instead of 11 years 2 months. In Standard VII it is higher by three months, in Standard II by two months, and in each of the other classes except Standards III, IV, and V by one month.

Though the number of children present at examination was smaller than usual, at thirty-six schools every child on the school roll was in his place and at three other schools each had but one absentee. Two hundred and twenty-five certificates of proficiency and 138 of competency were obtained by Standard VI pupils, as compared with 195 and 162 respectively last year. As the totals nearly correspond, evidently better results have been obtained in this class. We note here that by the new regulations as approved at the Inspectors' Conference, 1907, the qualification for the proficiency certificate will be raised, as 50 per cent. of the possible marks will be required in English as well as in each of the branches reading and composition.

The number of applications to sit for examination for certificates in classes below Standard VI still remains very small, only five competency certificates in Standard V being awarded.

In anticipation of these new regulations, which were expected to come into force at the beginning of 1908, it was found necessary to make some changes in the time and form of examination for certain schools. The regulations referred to will be based on the idea that, as a rule, promotions should be synchronous throughout all public schools, the children promoted taking their places in the higher standard classes on the 1st January or at the beginning of the school year, the final examination of the school by the head teacher having been held in the previous November or December. It is obvious that the Inspectors cannot possibly visit and examine all the schools of the district in the time mentioned, and provision is made for the results of the head teacher's examination being substituted for those of the Inspector. That the success of our system has been in the past largely due to the thoroughness and impartiality displayed by Inspectors in the course of their examination is generally acknowledged, and anything which would detract from the value of an independent examination is to be deplored. The examination by the Inspector, too, especially of Standard VI, furnishes in all classes a guide for the teacher as well as a stimulus for the child, and by demanding a full unvarying measure of attainment throughout the district tends to maintain the children's standard of scholarship at a high level. The value of the examination too has been amply demonstrated at those private schools which have of late years submitted themselves to public inspection. We therefore think it advisable that the pass examination of Standard VI, at least, should be retained in the hands of the Inspectors. To enable us in future to examine our largest centre nearer the end of the year than July, the Nelson City schools were taken rather later in the year and a separate examination made of their Sixth Standard classes. Some of the Waimea schools and Motueka and those in its immediate neighbourhood were in consequence examined somewhat earlier and in each case a later examination was held for the Sixth Standard children. A somewhat similar course may have to be adopted this year. Should a school be examined before its school year is complete, the examination must necessarily be confined to that part of the scheme of work that has been covered or to the work of the previous year.

The following briefly summarises our estimate of the efficiency of the schools examined: Good, 12; satisfactory to good, 21; satisfactory, 57—efficient, 90. Fair to satisfactory, 13; fair, 4; moderate, 1—inefficient, 18.

Of the twelve schools in which the work was classed as "good," six obtained the highest marks. Two schools under sole teachers were among those that attained distinction. The five most inefficient as well as most of those that more nearly attained the satisfactory limit were in Grade 0—that is, were schools of less than sixteen pupils in average attendance at each. For these it is difficult to obtain capable teachers and almost impossible to obtain experienced ones. All of the eighteen are conducted by sole teachers. In order to form as accurate a judgment as possible of the efficiency of a school in any subject requiring written papers and yet to avoid an excess of individual examination we have usually examined a section of each class in each subject. In Standard VI, however, and the lower-grade schools the full work of each pupil was taken.

From a comparison with the results of the previous year it will be seen that, though Standards III and IV show a slight improvement, there is a very pronounced falling-off in the work of Standards V, II, and I, while Standard VI apparently just maintains its position.

It is perhaps somewhat difficult to account for the disappointing result in Standard V arithmetic, but we find that in many other districts the poorest work comes from this class, so that it would appear to us that the difficulty lies to a certain extent in the scope of work allotted to Standard V as against the relatively easier range of work set down for the two previous standards. As regards the treatment of the subject in Standard I, we strongly advocate once more the importance of oral work in the lower classes, and the helpfulness of using actual objects in the first stages of number-building. At the same time it must be apparent that the mere construction and understanding of, say, the multiplication and addition tables covers but one side of the question—these tables must be learnt and known. It is in this mechanical side of the work that greater thoroughness should be demanded if the written work is to be within the same limits as the oral. Considerable advantage has been taken of the dual classification in English and arithmetic. We find alto-

gether 255 pupils working arithmetic in a lower standard class than that in which they were placed for English. The numbers from the various standards were as follows: Standard VI, 25; Standard V, 74; Standard IV, 61; Standard III, 48; Standard II, 41; Standard I, 6.

ENGLISH.— Reading and recitation continue to be well taught, very few indeed of our schools failing to give these branches of instruction satisfactory treatment. While several were classed good in each of these subjects, the marks for which often closely agreed, one small household school (Wairoa Gorge) was graded "excellent" for recitation. Improvements may yet be made in developing a more thorough appreciation of the subject-matter, and especially of the poems to be committed to memory, references to the authors, to the incidents in connection with the story, and to the literary merits of the poems not being omitted. In certain localities faulty pronunciation such as the misuse of the letter "h," the "colonial twang," the clipping of final consonants, the omission of the final "r," as well as its opposite, the addition of one to a final vowel, and the broadening of vowel-sounds must still be resolutely fought, though the general character of the reading is distinctly satisfactory. Two literary readers are still generally used, with the addition or substitution, in some few instances, of a geographical or historical reader. The *School Journal*, which first appeared during the year, has been used as an extra, and has not yet been commonly substituted for a literary reader. In schools above Grade 8 three readers might well be insisted upon; but in schools under sole teachers one literary reader, with a geographical or historical reader in lieu of the geography B or history course, is all that can be usually prepared in the time at the teacher's disposal.

Though the majority of the schools produced satisfactory work in the spelling and dictation tests, it is disappointing to find the papers less accurate than last year's, especially as we had hoped that the adoption of a systematic course of word-building in the lower standards would have had a beneficial effect. On the contrary, we regret to say that there has been a steady deterioration for the last four years. Probably the introduction of so many additional subjects into the curriculum has made increasingly difficult the task of maintaining a high standard in the essential subjects of an elementary education—spelling, composition, and the three "R's." Whether correct spelling be a necessity or not, there can be little doubt of the educational value of each of the other four subjects, and we shall certainly expect that teachers will see that in future the all-important branches of English and arithmetic are not crowded out of the syllabus or less effectively treated. In composition and other written exercises the spelling has been taken into account in assigning marks for the subject.

In composition, too, the marks obtained were not so high as previously, in spite of the fact that the test papers, of which we complained last year, were greatly improved in quality, the wording being less obscure, and the exercises less complicated in form and more within the comprehension of children of tender years. They may yet be improved by making them of more even quality throughout. In the Third Standard the papers set by us were rather more difficult than those previously set by the Department, and a letter was always exacted from Standard IV. We too often found both letters and essays meagre in subject-matter, the children being apparently unable to enlarge upon any topic, or even to describe fully an object which they had previously examined in the course of their nature-study. This difficulty may be overcome by always encouraging the children to express themselves fully in oral answering, especially when such an attractive subject as a natural object or phenomenon comes under observation.

We notice the following from the Board of Education's suggestions published with the English Code: "By the time the child has learnt to write without undue need of attention to the process itself, he should be able to express orally, with ease and clearness, a story heard, or incident seen, or a lesson received, and can then begin to use the same readiness of expression in writing. The length of the composition should naturally increase as facility of expression is gained; and in the higher classes facility is an object of equal importance with accuracy. No matter how advanced the composition may be, the oral exercises should never be discontinued.

But it is not in the work of the lower classes that deficiencies were so frequently found as in that of Standard V. Here, faults of which we have previously complained were too often apparent. Not only were many of the children ignorant of the functions of clauses and phrases, as was readily seen in their feeble attempts to answer such a test as "What question does this phrase answer?" but they were often quite unable to distinguish a phrase from a clause. Knowledge of the meaning of common prefixes and familiar selected words was also rare—a defect noticed also in connection with the reading lessons—whilst grammatical reasons for alterations made in faulty sentences were almost entirely lacking.

WRITING AND DRAWING.—In regard to these subjects we have little to add to our remarks in previous reports. We are satisfied that no deterioration is shown in these branches, which are as truly "manual" as any that come under the "handwork" class. The drawing especially shows to somewhat better advantage.

SINGING, too, is receiving more attention, and we were especially pleased with the great improvement made in PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION, chiefly in regard to its bearing on the health of the children, and to lessons on health. Thirty-seven of our schools, more than for any other subject, were awarded "good" marks for physical instruction.

HISTORY is still generally taught orally, Historical Readers being used in comparatively few cases. The record of schools doing satisfactory work in this subject is higher than previously attained.

GEOGRAPHY.—In our estimate of the work done under the head of geography but slight improvement is shown, though courses of work in observational geography should prove highly interesting as well as educative. At the same time we fear that some of the inferences expected to be drawn are almost beyond the reasoning-powers of children, and some of the astronomical phenomena might well be omitted from the course.

In the absence of better material for making relief maps (though paper-pulp might easily be made), the recommendation of Mr. Petrie, Chief Inspector, Auckland, might well be adopted. "In every playground should be laid out a level spot, say, 10 ft. by 8 ft., neatly bordered by wood, for making relief maps of countries that are being studied. A supply of sand or friable soil should be kept alongside."

Course B, geography, affords opportunity for so varied a treatment, and the information given is necessarily so indefinite, that it is very doubtful whether lasting impressions of any value are being made upon the children's minds. This year we recommended in preference courses of work to be constructed from the alternative course, Clause 43 of the regulations.

Nature-study.—A course of nature-study or science is taken in fifty-one schools, and we see no reason why the former should not be generally taught. The small amount of school time required for the study would be scarcely missed, and in its correlation with other branches of work such as compostiion—oral and written—geography, drawing from nature, and modelling in plasticine, as well as in cultivating the child's powers of observation and reasoning faculties, it should prove of incalculable benefit.

Science, apart from physiology and physical measurements, which are taken as branches of handwork, is taught in the form of physics or agricultural chemistry in but few schools; but we hope that the establishment of a chemical laboratory in connection with the Nelson Technical School will so educate and stimulate teachers that it will prove a veritable science-workshop for the whole district.

Needlework was taught in 101 schools, practically universally, as the few exceptions were those schools in which a male teacher is employed, or those in which there were only boys attending. We were well pleased with the neatness and cleanliness of the work, as well as with the regularity and evenness of the sewing, both in the samples, which were usually worked with coloured cotton, and the garments presented for examination. Thirty schools were commended for good work, and to five others even higher praise was awarded.

Handwork.—Handwork has been taken in forty-six schools, for the most part in a very satisfactory manner. A variety of branches has been undertaken, the chief being plasticine modelling, taught in twenty-seven schools; elementary agriculture, in twenty-six; elementary physiology, in fifteen; brush drawing, in twelve; and paper-folding, free-arm drawing, bricklaying, modelling in carton, and elementary physical measurements, in lesser numbers. These subjects of instruction have all been solely undertaken by the permanent teachers, with the exception of elementary agriculture, more fully referred to in another part of the report, which has been under the direction of a special instructor.

A considerable extension of this branch of work has been made during the year, chiefly in the way of placing the facilities offered by our present technical schools within reach of schools in the adjoining neighbourhood.

Classes for the instruction of teachers were again held in Nelson and Westport, the subjects taken up including drawing in its different branches, elementary geology, carton-work, cookery, woodwork, elementary botany, physics, chemistry, mathematics, and elementary physiology. In addition to the usual classes that have been carried on in the Nelson Technical School for the past two years, classes in agriculture were held for the first time at Wakefield, Richmond, Motueka, and Nelson, with a considerable amount of success. This class of instruction is, of course, as yet in quite the experimental stage. With the advantage of a chemical laboratory, for which the necessary grant has now been made by the Department, we look for a further development of this most important study.

Competitions.—A brief reference to the scheme of competitions instituted by Mr. Maginnity, Chairman of the Board, and formally adopted at the beginning of the year, will, we feel certain, prove of general interest. The object of the scheme as carried out was twofold. On the one hand it was an endeavour to encourage further study and research on the part of the youth of the district, who had passed through the ordinary primary school; while on the other it was an effort to stimulate the educational life of our present pupils. The competition was thus arranged in two distinct divisions—namely, Division A, for pupils attending our public schools, and Division B, for ex-pupils. Under the former division were included such subjects as drawing, writing, science (natural-history collections), and literature (essays). This section brought forth such a host of competitors, who sent in so much work of such a very high standard of excellence that we feel sure the object aimed at was most fully attained. In those sections that included drawing, writing, and science the judges had considerable difficulty in making their awards. We would like to call attention to one of the remarks of Mr. Kingsley in his comprehensive report on the natural-history collections. After expressing himself as much impressed with the number and quality of the exhibits sent in, he says, "It would be of very great service if anything could be done to encourage the formation of a small library in each school of books on the various branches of nature-study." We fully appreciate the great aid of such libraries of reference, and it is with pleasure that we are able to state that this idea has been anticipated in some of our schools, where a good beginning has already been made in the direction indicated. In Division B (open to ex-pupils), a rather limited number came forward. Nevertheless, we feel confident that the scheme must tend to much educational good throughout the district, and from the efforts we have had under review in Division A we hope to find many evidences of such benefit when visiting the schools during the current year.

Exhibition of Work.—For some considerable time we have had in view the holding of an exhibition of handwork, including writing and drawing, from the various schools under our charge. The usefulness of such a display has very often been brought home to us by the comparative disadvantages under which many of our teachers in the more remote parts of the district have to carry on their labours. Such teachers have few opportunities of seeing any work but that of their own schools, and have not the advantage of ready contact with new ideas and progressive methods of

working. To obviate this disability in some small degree, we have been in the habit of taking round with us specimens of work in drawing, writing, and sewing; but, unfortunately, our time in the very class of school we wish to reach is all too short, and the samples necessarily limited in number; hence, besides the advantage referred to, it seemed to us that such a display would be productive of good throughout the whole district. Towards the close of the year we were able to carry out our project, which we did the more readily by working it in conjunction with the scheme of competitions mentioned above. Further, in addition to handwork from the primary schools, a considerable part of the exhibition was devoted to samples illustrative of the work being carried on in the technical schools.

The exhibition was opened in the Nelson Technical School by the Chairman of the Board on the 20th December, seven rooms being required to contain the mass of work forwarded.

The exhibits from the technical schools included samples of drawing, painting, and modelling, which called forth general praise; models of plumbers' work, and specimens of woodwork and wood-carving, all indicating excellent lines of practical instruction; while the dressmaking classes furnished further evidences of the good work being carried on in both technical and school classes. From the primary schools we had a very large number of exhibits in drawing, writing, brushwork, plasticine modelling, and woodwork, and last, but not least, some excellent specimens of the products from the school gardens. Although some schools were unable to send forward any exhibit, we still had a most representative collection, as many of our remotest schools had some branch of work on view. In every sense the exhibition must be regarded as a complete success, much of the work displayed reflecting the greatest credit on teachers and pupils. We have to heartily thank the teachers of the district generally for their splendid response to our appeal for exhibits. We also feel deeply grateful to the Board for their co-operation and their support to the movement.

At the instance of the Principal of the Wellington Training College, a short winter course of study was held at the College, the object of which was to extend to teachers in small schools, who have had little opportunity for any training, some of the benefits of modern treatment of certain branches of school work. Needless to say, teachers were delighted with the opportunity, and those who were privileged to attend seemed highly interested in the course of work undertaken. We trust that by a continuance of this system many of our teachers will enjoy a similar advantage in the future.

By the passing of "The Education Act Amendment Act, 1907," several important changes have been introduced, the chief of which we here call attention to. We note that our educational district will now be entitled to two Junior National Scholarships, at least one of which must be awarded to one of the candidates from schools having not more than forty children in yearly average attendance, should there be a qualified candidate from such schools; while the standard of examination has been raised to subjects prescribed for Standard VI, and the age of a candidate must be not more than fourteen years on the first of the month in which the examination is held. Considerable change, too, has been made in the conditions on which Senior National Scholarships are awarded. Instead of a certain number being allotted to each university district, they are now to be open to the Dominion generally. Again, no further Queen's Scholarships are to be awarded. In regard to continuation classes, we are pleased to find that provision has been made for allowing these classes to be held at any hour on Saturdays. A clause that should urge all uncertificated teachers to become fully qualified provides for a deduction of 5 per cent. from the salary of those teachers who hold only temporary certificates or licenses. Lastly, the attainment by any teacher of the age of sixty-five years becomes a reasonable cause for determination of engagement by the Board.

We have been well satisfied with the order, discipline, and tone of our schools, and the fact that in our opinion ninety of the 108 examined proved efficient should, in spite of our criticisms of certain details and the faults we have pointed out for correction, convince the Board that it has every reason to be satisfied with the general conduct of its schools, especially as wherever we have had to assess the quality of the work done the same high standard of excellence as in former years has been demanded.

We have, &c.

G. A. Harkness, M.A.,
A. Crawford, B.A., } Inspectors.

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

GREY.

Sir,— Education Office, Greymouth, 31st March, 1908.

I have the honour to present a general report on the schools of the district for the year 1907.

Since the 1st June thirty-six inspection visits have been made, besides a number of special visits in connection with new schools and other matters. Thirty-two public and three private schools have been examined, together with the Greymouth District High School, regarding which a special report has already been submitted to you. One hundred and thirty-one pupils presented themselves as candidates for proficiency certificates, and 55 per cent. of these were successful. These figures do not include the Catholic schools, one of which—the Grey Convent School—achieved a measure of success in this direction which is certainly deserving of special mention. Every Standard VI pupil in this school gained a proficiency certificate, and none obtained less than 80 per cent. of the possible aggregate of marks.

During my examination of the schools epidemics of measles and influenza were prevalent in the district. Many children were absent from examination owing to this cause, and in some cases

teachers and children were present who ought to have been in bed. In connection with this matter of sickness I have to point out that there has been an unprecedented number of teachers absent this year on sick-leave. This fact has a very important financial aspect; and if the applications for sick-leave are as numerous in the coming year as they have been in the year just closed it will probably be necessary for the Board to revise their regulations on the subject.

In estimating the quality of the work done in the compulsory subjects in the public schools, 1 school has been classified as excellent, 19 as good, 2 as satisfactory, 9 as fair, and 1 as inferior. In the additional subjects, 19 schools are classified as good, 1 as satisfactory, 10 as fair, and 2 as inferior. In respect to general efficiency 20 are classified as good, 5 as satisfactory, and 7 as fair.

The following is a summary of the examination statistics of the public schools for the year :—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	16	16	14 3
" VI	135	131	13 11
" V	145	136	12 11
" IV	175	169	11 8
" III	190	180	11 3
" II	185	182	9 8
" I	187	180	9 0
Preparatory	692	564	7 0
Totals	1,725	1,558	11 2*

* Mean of average age.

These figures show an increase over last year on the number of children on the roll, but they show also a greater proportion of absentees from examination. This is accounted for by the fact—already adverted to—that epidemics of influenza and measles prevailed during the period of examination, a hundred young children being absent in one school alone from this cause.

On the whole the schools of the district, in spite of many drawbacks, have maintained a very satisfactory level of efficiency during the year, and the various subjects of the syllabus have been treated with intelligence, thoroughness, and skill. The most notable exception to this statement occurs in connection with the subject of composition. In most of the schools—and especially in the larger ones—the essays were well done; but the tests in analysis and synthesis of sentences were altogether too much for the majority of the Standard VII pupils. The ingenuity and ability displayed by some of them in combining sentences so as to form sense of some sort, while they did not so much as understand the instructions given them, were to me a striking proof of the native intelligence of the young Dominionite. The sentences so framed, however, did not comply with the conditions imposed in the question, the failure arising from the lack of a good broad foundation knowledge of analysis and grammar. While it is doubtless true that the excessive attention given in former days to the niceties of English grammar was to a very large extent a waste of time, a knowledge of the chief rules of syntax and of sufficient grammar to be able to understand and apply these rules is still absolutely essential to the intelligent and successful teaching of composition.

Weakness in arithmetic was answerable for a majority of the failures in Standard VI, this weakness being due to the fact that teachers have concentrated their attention exclusively on method and have ignored the fact that accuracy also is a matter of prime importance. Although marks were in all cases allowed for correct methods of working, it seems to me that there never was a time when accuracy in arithmetic was so desirable and necessary as at the present day. In the merchant's office or in the various departments of the Civil Service it is accuracy that is demanded, and inaccurate work is worse than useless. Sixth Standard pupils a quarter of a century ago would have laughed at the present Sixth Standard tests.

Reading is good in only a few schools, the fact being that in most cases this important subject is now being robbed of its fair share of attention and time. The necessary result of this neglect is slovenly, slipshod reading, with an almost entire absence of fluency and intelligent expression. A habit of dropping the aspirate in such words as "why," "when," "where," &c., is also becoming disagreeably prevalent. It should only be necessary to draw attention to this blemish to insure its being speedily eradicated.

The teachers' Saturday drawing class has had the effect of greatly improving the drawing in many schools. The correlation of free-arm drawing and brushwork with nature-study has acted and reacted most beneficially, giving an added interest to each of these subjects.

Physical drill is taken in all schools, and the movements are in most cases executed with ready confidence and precision. These exercises are most popular with the pupils when performed to music, and I was pleased to see that some schools had adopted the practice of marching in to music. This has much to commend it. In some schools children are taught to walk in on their toes when entering or passing through the rooms of the school. In my judgment this is both unnecessary and undesirable. A child can walk softly and yet in a graceful and natural manner; but to train a child from the infant gallery to the Sixth Standard to walk in this crouching, hobbling, unnatural manner cannot be conducive to a manly bearing or to an easy and elegant gait in walking.

Agriculture and cottage gardening have been taken up by nine schools; and Mr. Bruce, the Instructor of Agriculture, has given a series of interesting and instructive lectures to teachers on this subject. These lectures were well attended, and were in a marked degree helpful to teachers—not only in agriculture, but in nature-study generally. Teachers' classes in free-arm drawing, brush painting, and in cookery were also held during the year. Carton-work and paper-folding were taken by several schools, and cookery was taken by nearly every school in the district. The children from some of these schools have to travel some thirty miles by rail and lose a whole day in order to obtain a two-hours cookery lesson. Important as the subject is, in these cases it is costing the children too dear, and the schools which, labouring under this disadvantage in respect to distance, continue indefinitely to devote a whole day a week to this subject must necessarily suffer in their general school-work. A woodwork class is held in connection with the Greymouth District High School, and a special class in wood-carving was also arranged this year. Altogether quite as much technical work has been done during the year as the circumstances of the district render advisable.

Speaking generally, the teachers of this district have worked excellently and conscientiously throughout a particularly trying year, and they are deserving of every credit. Where failure has occurred it has been in almost every case owing to circumstances beyond the teacher's control. In some instances the introduction of the new syllabus and the noise and fuss made about the necessity for new methods have had rather a bewildering and distracting effect upon the teachers—especially upon those who are young and inexperienced. Amidst the temporary and perhaps inevitable dislocation and confusion incidental to the transition from the old methods and syllabus to the new, I would ask teachers to remember that to store the mind with knowledge still remains one of the aims of education and that a Standard VI proficiency certificate is intended to represent not only that a pupil's faculties have been developed and quickened to a certain degree, but also that he is the possessor of a more or less definite amount of actual, positive, accurate information on the subjects in which he has been taught.

The school buildings generally are in fair repair, though painting is in many cases badly needed. As to the school grounds, their condition throughout the district is such as to leave abundant room for improvement. Not one of them can be said to make even a remote approach to being "a thing of beauty," and most of them are supremely ugly. Now that cottage gardening has been introduced in this district it is not too much to expect that some little attempt should be made in the direction of beautifying our school surroundings. A more enthusiastic observation of Arbor Day and a little regular systematic attention would work wonders, and would very soon remove from our school surroundings that dreary air of unrelieved ugliness which now hangs over them.

I have, &c.,

E. A. Scott, Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Grey.

WESTLAND.

Sir,— Education Board Office, Hokitika, 14th February, 1908.

I have the honour to present a report for the year 1907 on the work of the schools of the district. The tables accompanying the report present information relating to the numbers and results in connection with the examination of thirty-five public and five Catholic schools.

The following table is a summary of the numbers and average age of the various standard classes. It may be added that the number of pupils in the preparatory classes over eight years of age is sixty-seven, and that seventeen pupils in standards were placed in a lower standard in arithmetic and one in a higher class.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class. Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII	45	42	15	5
" VI	75	75	13	11
" V	70	67	12	7
" IV	102	96	12	1
" III	104	101	11	2
" II	124	122	10	1
" I	104	102	9	4
Preparatory	398	373	6	9
Totals	1,022	978	11	5*

* Mean of average age.

An annual visit was made to each of the schools, and, apart from those of South Westland, each school received at least one inspection visit. Owing to changes of teachers and other special causes it was found expedient to visit several schools more frequently. The teachers of all the smaller schools were, moreover, required to forward, at regular intervals for inspection, specimens of the pupils' work in the form of exercises worked in connection with periodical or special tests. The

opportunity for criticism and advice thus furnished was found of great benefit to the teachers, especially to those with limited experience.

During the year ten schools have been open on 420 or more half-days, and seventeen others on at least 400 half-days. Sixteen schools that were in operation from the beginning of the year report a school year of less than 400 half-days. While in a few cases the reduction in the number is due to special causes, there is still need, as in previous years, to draw attention to the failure to maintain the school year required by the regulations, which have been framed to allow time to prepare the course of instruction without undue strain.

In this district, instruction beyond the requirements of the Sixth Standard is confined almost solely to that given to the secondary class of the Hokitika District High School. Only eight other pupils that had previously obtained proficiency certificates were on the rolls of the schools at the time of the annual examination. Of these, six satisfied the extra requirements of the Seventh Standard by the inclusion in the course of advanced English and arithmetic and such subjects as algebra, shorthand, book-keeping, French, and Latin.

In the secondary class instruction has been given to forty-seven pupils, of whom twenty-six were from parts of the district outside of Hokitika. The course extends as far as the requirements of the Junior Civil Servce and Matriculation Examinations. At the end of the year seven students were successful in one or both of these examinations. As practically in every case the term of study of the pupils of the class does not extend beyond three years, experience proves that to occupy a good position in connection with either of the examinations mentioned students require, on entry to the class, to have passed the final test of the primary course with some degree of credit, and it is important to note that, as the time devoted to secondary education in district high schools is short, the work of the teachers is too exacting to allow of much special attention to pupils that join late in the year or that fail to maintain regular attendance.

Another feature worthy of comment is the extent to which the work of the secondary class is overshadowed by the preparation for examinations. The Junior Civil Service is required by scholarship-holders, by candidates for positions as pupil-teachers or teachers of small schools, and by those entering various trades, professions, and the Civil Service. The result is that the first object of a large majority of the students is to pass this examination. For similar reasons the Matriculation Examination is the chief aim to a number of the pupils. Owing to the limitation in the time, the efforts of the teachers and scholars is concentrated on the courses prescribed, and subjects are selected according to their examination value. Practical science and technical subjects, especially, have to occupy a very subordinate position, and for this there seems to be no remedy. The limitation in both time and staffs forbids a wider treatment of the secondary course.

The pupils presented for certificates in the Sixth Standard numbered seventy-five. Of these, forty-eight were granted proficiency certificates and ten received competency certificates. The number of failures has increased from seven in the previous year to seventeen. This apparent reduction in the efficiency of the instruction is due largely to the number of changes of teachers in schools in charge of sole teachers. In view of the proposal to hold all examinations of the pupils of the Sixth Standard throughout the Dominion at the end of the calendar year and the institution of this arrangement in some districts, it may be mentioned that of the seventy-five pupils of this class, seven on the roll of the schools of South Westland were examined in February or March, thirty-four were in the schools examined within one month of the close of the year, and thirty-four others were in schools where the annual visit was made within three months of the same date. No expression of a desire for an alteration of the present system has been made. Teachers find an interval between the examination and the end of the year advantageous in preparing pupils for scholarships and in revising the work of those joining the secondary class at the beginning of the following year. It is understood, moreover, that any pupil failing to secure a certificate earlier in the year is at liberty to present himself again during the examination of any school in December. The need for a change in this district is, therefore, not very evident.

The classification of the remaining divisions of the primary schools has, in general, been carried out by the teachers with judgment and with concern for the future progress of the classes. In the smaller schools the Inspector naturally takes a larger share in the classification, which in all schools is based partly on the results of tests made periodically during the year. In this district it is not found so necessary to insist on elaborate schemes of work previously prepared, but a complete record is required of the work done during each term, and of the results of each periodical test. The chief difficulty in this connection is to secure a careful adherence to the requirements of the syllabus. On the one hand the use of certain text-books leads to the attempt to deal with matter not included in the prescribed course, and on the other too much regard for the scope of the examination-cards leads to the neglect of important branches of the various subjects. The number of questions in both the English and arithmetic cards set by the Education Department are too few. Consequently there is not room on any one card, especially in connection with the higher standards, to provide an adequate test of a year's work. This defect, with certain frequent omissions, leads inexperienced teachers to form an inaccurate interpretation of the requirements of the course of instruction. It has been necessary to impress upon them the fact that it is not text-books or examination-cards, but the prescribed course that must be the guide in selecting the subject-matter of the instruction.

Apart from the derangement of the work of a few schools, due to changes of teachers, the standard of efficiency is quite equal to that of previous years. As in a small district ample opportunity exists for an intimate and regular acquaintance with the condition of the schools and for advice to the teachers on details of school work, it is not necessary to use this report for the purpose of inculcating, in connection with individual subjects, a knowledge of principles or methods of teaching. Attention is directed therefore to matters of more general interest.

One of these is suggested by a previous reference to text-books. For a considerable number of years all school-books used in the primary classes, with the exception of one prescribed series of readers and the arithmetic books, have been supplied by the Board for use in school only. The exceptions are due to the use of the books mentioned in the preparation of home lessons. There has therefore existed in this district a considerable degree of uniformity. The only complaint that has reached the point of expression is from parents removing from one district to another. These demur to the purchase of new sets of school-books. As this question has recently been raised officially, the suggestion is offered that if the selection of text-books is carefully made, uniformity can have little effect on the training of the pupils. It is true that teachers at times complain of the necessity for teaching year after year from the same text-books, but this is unavoidable, as, even if teachers select the books, the objection of parents prevents frequent changes. It follows that, if uniformity is advisable in one district, there can be no objection to uniformity throughout the Dominion, and this would remove all ground of complaint where families remove from one district to another. From the point of view of the total cost to the people of the Dominion, great advantage would result from the provision by the Government of all text-books used in the primary schools. The experience in this district is that books used only in school last for several years, and if, at suitable periods, the series were changed, there would be sufficient opportunity to take advantage of improvements and to afford variety.

Frequent reference has been made in previous reports to the importance of the cultivation in the pupils of powers of observation and ability to describe the result of the exercise of perceptive faculties. Unfortunately, the reason for this insistence is still too common, and the opportunity is taken to emphasize another aspect of the same principle. A correct guide as to the value of the methods adopted in a school is the extent of the voluntary interest displayed by the pupils. When the instruction follows educative lines, the pupils' alacrity and enthusiasm are readily recognised. In the physical exercises this brightness and interest are essential, and ought to be accompanied by voluntary effort to serve their purpose. "So long as exercise gives us pleasure and exhilaration it is doing us good. When we cease to enjoy it, it is either neutral or harmful physically." Further, mental exercises should be accompanied by the same brightness and interest. To secure this, good methods—less routine, more variety—are essential. Every device should be used to render more vivid the mental images suggested by the objects of study. Even inexperienced teachers are known to achieve success in this direction to such an extent that there is an absence of a great contrast in the mental attitude of children on entering and on leaving the schoolroom.

The examination of the Catholic schools indicates laudable efficiency in some schools at least, and fair or satisfactory results in all. In accordance with the provisions of the Act passed during the year, the inspection of these and other private schools that have applied for it will require to be carried out fully in accordance with the regulations applying to public schools.

I have, &c.,

A. J. MORTON, B.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Westland.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Education Office, Christchurch, 23rd January, 1908.

We have the honour to present our general report on the schools of the district for the year 1907.

The round of inspection and examination of elementary public schools has again been fully accomplished, the instruction given in secondary classes in the nine district high schools has been subjected to careful inquiry and searching tests, and some 1,300 children belonging to fourteen private schools have also been examined. In our annual (or examination) reports on the several schools we have followed the long-established and very desirable practice obtaining in this district. Not only have the tabular forms furnished by the Department for such reports been duly filled, the information these contain has been supplemented by a separate report from the Inspector conveying, in the form of "General Remarks," his impressions with regard to the efficiency of each school, and offering such suggestions as might be deemed likely to benefit either teacher or pupils. To us personally it is becoming evident that in carrying out these duties the margin of spare time for recreation and for recognition of social claims has practically vanished, and that opportunities for general reading and for keeping abreast of modern movements in the field of education are by no means abundant.

The number of schools in operation remains practically unaltered, but we regard with some concern a slight decrease in the enrolment at the dates of examination. The number actually present at the date of the annual visit was found to be nearly 1,300 below that recorded for 1906; the unusual prevalence of epidemics may, however, account for most of the difference here noted. In our last annual report reference was made to the diminished attendance in a large number of rural schools, particularly in localities where settlement has been fairly close for more than a quarter of a century. During the past year a similar decline has been noted in several of the larger city schools. Business premises and factory buildings continue to encroach upon residential areas, and facilities for locomotion encourage city workers, more than in the past, to seek the pleasures and advantages of suburban residence. The growth of population in suburban centres has naturally led to the establishment of new schools, the opening of which has materially affected the attendance in city quarters. To a considerable extent it has, unfortunately, been necessary to duplicate school accommodation; and, however much we may regret the necessity, no other solution of the problem has yet been suggested. Meanwhile our sympathies are extended to those faith-

ful workers who find that prolonged service has only brought more scanty rewards, and we express our hope that success may attend the efforts put forth to place teachers in a position less exposed to the anxieties attendant upon a fluctuating, and too often a diminishing, income. These considerations suggest another topic on which we venture to base another claim. There is too often a dearth of ordinary conveniences in connection with teachers' dwellings, few of which will bear comparison as to equipment with the workers' homes now being provided by the State. Recognising as we do the extent to which the senior, and indeed all pupils of a school, may profit by being brought in daily contact with evidences of care, neatness, cleanliness, regard for sanitation, and all the influences for good that emanate from a well-kept and well-ordered household, we feel that public funds will not be wasted if masters' wives receive assistance and encouragement in making their abodes, as far as may be, models of efficient "home rule" and domestic comfort.

In the routine of duties connected with our official visits to the schools no new departures were made during the past year. We feel, indeed, more strongly than ever that it would be unsafe to abandon to any greater extent than at present the examination test as a reliable index to the efficiency of a school. In those cases (and their number is not despicable) where it would be safest to minimise the application of the test, teachers themselves, and, we believe, a goodly majority of the pupils concerned still welcome the so-called ordeal, and are truly gratified by such opportunities as are afforded them to show that their year's labour has been directed to profitable ends. Ardent exponents of new ideas may pity those unfortunates who have been trained to "dance in chains" and who still cherish their bondage, but there is surely something to say on the other side. A practice which induces both teacher and taught to take a just pride in the work they undertake, to put the best there is in them to the performance of their task, and cheerfully to present the product, whether for favourable comment or for honest censure, does not stand utterly discredited in man's eyes, and we humbly hope is not entirely unacceptable in the sight of the Great Overseer.

In connection with the annual visit we have continued the practice of conferring with head teachers upon their proposals for the advancement of pupils in classes below Standard VI, and we are convinced that such conferences have had a salutary effect in checking to a very considerable extent the vicious policy of awarding undeserved promotion. This contention is supported by the results attendant upon the examination of Standard VI—in which, during the last year, 1,389 candidates presented themselves. Of these, 849 gained the "proficiency" certificate, 346 gained the guarantee of "competency," and only 194 failed to obtain any certificate. The figures quoted afford, in our opinion, satisfactory evidence on points of some importance. They show (speaking in round numbers) that more than fourteen pupils out of every two hundred enrolled, or, in other words, over 7 per cent. of the total attendance, remain to face the final test of examination in Standard VI. Naturally we would prefer seeing a much larger proportion. Again resorting to round numbers they show that seventeen out of every twenty-eight candidates examined in Standard VI succeeded in winning the proficiency certificate, that one out of every four was deemed worthy of a "competency," and that the failures did not appreciably exceed one-seventh of the total number entering the lists. To those who can spare time for an interval of calm reflection these facts convey some interesting material. They show that the prosperity enjoyed by the country at large for the last few years has brought a merely nominal increase in the number of children permitted to remain at school for the completion of a year in Standard VI. This fact is more than regrettable. On the brighter side, however, they indicate that sound judgment has generally been exercised in the promotion of children prior to Standard VI stage, and that at this stage their general preparation and training have been as efficient as may reasonably be expected.

We now propose to make brief reference to another matter intimately connected with the subjects under discussion. A year ago, at the general meeting of the New Zealand Educational Institute, and almost immediately afterwards at the triennial conference of Inspectors, resolutions were carried favouring a new departure in the system of standard promotions and also in some details connected with examination of Standard VI. With regard to the former it was agreed that the reopening of schools after Christmas vacation should uniformly be adopted as the time most suitable for the reorganization of classes and for promotion from one standard to another, while with regard to the latter it was also recognised as a natural corollary that the examination of pupils seeking certificates for Standard VI should be held during the last two months of the year. The advantages of the proposals are so obvious that they meet with our full approval, though we clearly see grave difficulties in the way of their practical application. In North Canterbury these difficulties are accentuated in two directions—first by the volume of work to be overtaken by the Inspectors during the year, and next by the geographical distribution of schools over an extremely long and generally a rather narrow strip of country. On these grounds, and in view of the fact that no regulations bearing upon the proposals have yet been issued by the Department, we have hesitated to make any change in our routine, feeling that for most of our teachers the experiences of the last few years have not been altogether lacking in variety. Failing the issue of departmental instructions it is intended, early in the current year, to seek some pronouncement of the Board's views, and to make such changes in our programme as will bring these at once into operation.

It is noted with a good deal of contentment that the number of teachers remaining inexcusably ignorant of existing regulations, and apparently unfamiliar with the spirit pervading not only the new syllabus, but all modern conceptions of the ends of State education, continues to diminish. It is, however, painful to observe the utter mistrust of all change evinced by some workers of the highest character, whose attainments are far beyond the ordinary, and whose personal influence is of the best. They regard with superstitious reverence a system that has had its day, seeming to forget that progress must imply variety and change, that stagnation means death and all that is unwholesome, and that in education as in all other work "beneath the circuit of the sun" neither the beginning nor the end is in our time.

The freedom permitted to teachers by the present syllabus furnished one of the strongest recommendations in its favour. During the past year, however, experience has shown far too often how head teachers have failed to recognise that greater freedom necessarily implies greater responsibilities. Teachers leaving to accept other appointments have time after time failed to furnish for their successors necessary records setting forth the work undertaken for the year, and the portions accomplished prior to their departure. It cannot be too plainly affirmed that we hold such omissions to constitute most serious neglect of plain duty, and to indicate a callous disregard of interests which should have been a teacher's primary care.

In the statistical portions of this report the main features diverge but slightly from those observable in the report for the previous year. The average ages remain practically unaltered, but in calculating these a rising tendency was frequently noticed. The extent, however, was insufficient (except in the case of Standard IV) to make any perceptible difference in the final result. This year the number of children reaching the status of Standard I was slightly greater than in 1906, but we are still convinced that progress to this stage might well be accelerated. A further diminution has taken place in the number of pupils remaining to take up the work of Standard VII, but this does not necessarily imply that the demand for instruction at that stage has materially slackened. The increased attendance at the Girls' High School and the establishment of continuation classes at the Technical College are factors which probably account for the whole of the decline just noted.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	336	299	14 9
" VI	1,451	1,389	13 9
" V	1,929	1,826	13 0
" IV	2,317	2,197	12 2
" III	2,415	2,269	11 1
" II	2,284	2,144	10 1
" I	2,311	2,099	9 0
Preparatory	6,411	5,096	7 0
Totals	19,454	17,319	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

In the succeeding paragraphs we propose, in accordance with Regulation 12, to discuss as regards quantity and quality the work accomplished in the prescribed subjects of instruction.

READING.—There are but few schools in which the treatment of this subject fails to reach the plane of satisfactory efficiency, and in a goodly number it has strong claims to unqualified commendation. Naturally there are instances, more than a few, where expression might be improved and where those pleasing modulations which lend charm to the rendering of a cultured student are practically unknown; but, in only a few do the pupils of upper standards fail to read with satisfactory fluency and with very fair intelligence passages previously unseen. In the lower classes "sight" tests are not always negotiated so successfully. If, however, some allowance is made in consideration of the lack of prolonged practice this admission need not occasion acute distress.

In the more general establishment of school libraries and in every effort made to provide variety and abundance of reading-material we hail with pleasure the acceptance of a policy long advocated in annual reports on the schools of North Canterbury. But, "lest one good custom should corrupt the world" we would remind those most concerned to be on their guard against a tendency to scamper through volume after volume in a frantic and vain attempt to swell the list of books allegedly "read." The practice of reading with eyes and fingers only is none too rare, and more harm than good may arise from its pursuit. The reading habit was never so prevalent as it has now become, and, while conceding the truth of the maxim that in these days "the man who does not read is lost," we feel that the plight of the man who knows not how to read and what to read is no less perilous. Accepting the risk of wearisome repetition we again plead for variety of reading-matter. Granting that the demand for useful information and for knowledge bearing directly upon the practical pursuits of every-day life ought not to fall upon deaf ears, we yet remember that "man does not live by bread alone," and we feel that heart-culture is the basis of true culture. An essayist has said that there are two worlds, the world that we can measure with rule and line, and the world that we can feel with our hearts and imaginations. To be sensible of the truth of only one of these is to know truth but by halves.

In a considerable number of schools comprehension of the reading lesson and of the pieces selected for recitation is a disappointing feature. Where pupils fail in making at least an intelligent attempt to convey in their own words some interpretation of the thoughts embodied in the passages dealt with it is felt that the main object of these lessons has not been realised. The whole programme of instruction provides no better opportunities than these to bring the minds and tastes of teachers and taught into mutual play, and to promote the culture just referred to. As a side issue it is needless to say that the teaching of composition will be materially aided if pupils are brought to recognise and appreciate beauty of thought and the happy choice of words which enhances its charm.

SPELLING.—Regarding this topic we repeat the opinion expressed in last year's report that so far as orthography is concerned the subject is very well taught. We would, however, welcome fuller evidence of familiarity with the force of prefixes and affixes, and a more general display of facility in their practical application.

WRITING.—In most schools this subject receives due attention, penmanship in the highest standards having reached a stage quite suited to the purposes of ordinary life, and sufficiently advanced to permit of rapid development into a style which will meet the requirements of a business career. In several schools this branch shows surprising excellence, but there are yet more than a few where the correct method of holding the pen is not duly observed, and where grotesque or harmful attitudes at the desk are still tolerated. A mistake is rather frequently made in permitting beginners to hold their pencils after a fashion which ought to be abandoned when they come to hold a pen. Why not begin at the beginning and avoid the humiliation involved in asking children to unlearn habits which school life has done its best to confirm?

COMPOSITION.—During recent years gratifying progress and improvement have been made in this subject. In a majority of schools its treatment is systematic and sound, the essays submitted being marked by evident appreciation of literary form and by considerable originality of thought. Where, however, the barrenness of the efforts put forth is most painfully noticeable we are inclined to ascribe the poverty of the results to two causes—first the absence of definite aim in the teacher's method, and next the pupil's lack of interest in the topics selected. As a starting-point from which a systematic method may be naturally evolved we would suggest the "conversation," the picture talk, the well-told story, and the simple but clear and intelligent expression of the chief features of the reading lesson. With these we may pave the way to the more advanced stage in which the pupils make their first efforts in written composition. With the preliminary training referred to, children will bring to this task minds "possessed of ideas to express," and will approach their work with eager confidence. The intelligent exercise of memory may be brought into play in recalling the incidents of some previous talk, the mental pictures then formed may be retouched in the written exercises, imagination may be allowed to work, and the pupils may venture to be original by adding some little ideas of their own.

In following out such a scheme correct writing and spelling of every-day words should receive attention. The selection, the preparation, and the presentment of the subject should aim at awakening the pupils' interest, and the pupils must have in their own minds definite ideas arising from their own observation and inquiry, from lessons they have read, from stories they have heard, or from suggestive questions put by the teacher. With progress in age and intelligence, originality should be cultivated and encouraged. They should be led to plan out their essays for themselves, and to expect kindly criticism from their teachers and classmates. The use of slipshod English and colloquial vulgarisms in oral answering should be prohibited, and every opportunity should be taken for the reading and study of literary gems.

ARITHMETIC.—The proficiency secured in arithmetic remains almost unaltered. Some improvement is found in Standard I and in the preparatory stages, as teachers come to a better understanding with regard to the preliminary work required. In Standards II and IV the subject holds its own; in Standard V the output is again disappointing; but in Standard VI the pupils as a body present work ranging from satisfactory to good. We are inclined to think that in any revision of the syllabus the distribution of the work might be improved, but meanwhile we urge the importance of dealing with principles more than with "rules" or formulæ. Experience again leads us to reaffirm our belief in the efficacy of abundant "mental" practice.

GEOGRAPHY.—Good progress is being made in the more modern treatment of this subject, and in most schools a considerable amount of useful work has been accomplished. The old-fashioned wordmongering system has practically disappeared, the existing experience of the pupil is drawn upon more freely in lessons given, it is becoming more fully recognised that the child's ideas of other rivers and mountains must be evolved from his knowledge of the stream in which he "paddles" and the hills which provide its waters and control its course. Where opportunities for outdoor observation are not readily at hand the sand-tray and the model in the playground furnish illustrative material of considerable value; and we hope to see more general recourse to the use of rough diagrams done in coloured chalks on brown paper, by means of which some teachers lend a good deal of realism to their explanations of remote and unfamiliar phenomena. In not a few cases it is found that, both in Course A and Course B geography, teachers have hampered themselves with programmes too comprehensive for one year's treatment. In the former course especially it is well to remember that the mode of dealing with the subject is all-important.

DRAWING.—The work presented under this heading varies, as in the previous year, from good to moderate. In the lower classes we would gladly see the practice of drawing small patterns less prevalent, but in the higher we note with pleasure that attempts to co-ordinate drawing with other subjects of instruction are becoming more general.

HISTORY AND CIVIC INSTRUCTION.—The provision made for dealing with these subjects is as liberal as can be expected, and in many schools a goodly proportion of pupils have derived substantial profit from the lessons given.

NATURE-STUDY AND ELEMENTARY SCIENCE.—These subjects in a special degree lend themselves to variety both of choice and treatment. In a large number of schools the topics are well chosen, and, handled as they are in a style which shows true appreciation of the purpose of science-teaching, they yield very satisfactory results. The pupils take an active part in unfolding courses of instruction, they watch with interest the experiments that are carried out, and are eager observers of phenomena on which definite conclusions may be based. Training of such a nature is of high value and is worthy of all encouragement. In some cases, however, teachers are unduly anxious to store the minds of children with mere statements of fact, and in these the real objects of a training in science are quite overlooked. Occasionally some overlapping of programmes was noticed, a higher

class taking a course practically identical with that prescribed for a lower. With the proposal to combine more closely the teaching of science and physiography in city and suburban schools where the senior pupils take up some form of manual training we quite concur, the two subjects having a mutual reaction and a natural affinity. In certain district high schools we regret to find that lack of apparatus and other suitable provision bars the way to any efficient work, but we learn with pleasure that the largest of these departments, that at Christchurch West, has practically secured an equipment worthy of the institution and the reputation it enjoys.

Health and Physical Training.—These are matters closely related, and both receive a commendable share of attention. Indeed, it is not unusual to find that in the former subject the scope of the work presented for one year would have furnished a very complete programme for two.

General.—Of the cadet movement, of its direct influence upon the members of the various corps and its indirect influence upon the discipline and tone of the larger schools, we can speak only in terms of admiration. The interest the boys display in every detail of duty and the spirit of self-sacrifice which leads the masters concerned to forfeit many an hour of well-earned leisure are worthy of all praise. At the November gathering of the North Canterbury Public Schools' Amateur Athletic Association the large attendance of spectators showed how strongly its objects appeal to public sympathies, while the organizing capacity displayed in the compilation of the programme and its smooth working was specially noteworthy. To the lady teachers whose efforts again contributed largely to the attractions and the success of the day's proceedings special thanks are justly due. As observers whose interests are not wholly submerged in the mustier details of everyday routine we are led to hope that, with the passing of the years, our schools may still send forth to meet life's battles young people whose bodies are hardened by the games they have played, who are imbued with some sense of their responsibility as future citizens, who have learned to use their talents to the best of their ability, whose self-control and experience of discipline have taught them that obedience is the way to command, and that duty is better than pleasure.

The district is fortunate in possessing a large body of teachers who fully realise the grave importance and the far-reaching influences of their work. Their calling is a true Crusade—the eternal Crusade against ignorance, and among them are found not a few who resolutely tread the thorny path of duty for duty's sake, who in modest self-effacement and in eloquent silence approve themselves worthy of the cause they have espoused.

We have, &c.,

Thos. Ritchie, B.A.,
T. S. Foster, M.A., } Inspectors.
E. K. Mulgan, M.A.,

The Chairman, Education Board, North Canterbury.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

Sir,— Education Office, Timaru, 24th March, 1908.

We have the honour to present our annual report for the year 1907.

At the close of the year there were seventy-six schools in operation. In addition to the public schools we examined the five Roman Catholic schools of the district. Reports on the secondary departments of the district high schools are printed in a separate paper.

The following table shows the number of pupils on the roll, the number present at the annual visit, and the average age of each class:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	154	126	15 1
" VI	418	403	13 8
" V	527	494	12 11
" IV	621	574	12 0
" III	637	607	11 0
" II	618	587	9 11
" I	616	581	8 10
Preparatory	1,604	1,408	7 0
Totals	5,195	4,780	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

The figures in this table show for the year an increase of forty-six in the roll-number. A decrease of fifty in the number present at the annual visit is accounted for by an outbreak of influenza which for several months affected the attendance of almost every school in the district.

Early in the year, after receiving the Board's sanction for the change, we gave intimation to the teachers that we proposed to examine candidates for certificates of proficiency and for Standard VI certificates of competency, not at their own schools at the time of our annual visit as formerly, but at convenient centres, at each of which the pupils from a group of adjacent schools could be

assembled. These central examinations commenced on the 25th November, and so far as the attendance of the pupils was concerned were completed on the 2nd December. The certificates obtained were issued to the successful candidates before the closing of the schools for the Christmas holidays. In order to bring the work to be done by each candidate within the compass of an ordinary school day, ten days previous to the commencement of the central examinations we sent out to every school that had candidates freehand drawing exercises to be copied by the pupils and returned to the Education Office. The teacher attached his certificate that the drawings were done in the specified time and that they were completed by the pupil without aid and without previous trial of the exercise. Each pupil was required to bring for our inspection at the central examination the drawing-books used during the year, showing the amount and quality of the drawing other than freehand that had been overtaken. With the subject of drawing thus disposed of, the pupils were able without pressure to do their English and arithmetic papers in the forenoon and their geography and dictation in the afternoon of the same day, the reading and recitation of each pupil being taken during the progress of the written work, but not in the presence of the other candidates. On coming forward to read, each candidate presented his drawing-books for inspection, and the marks assigned were taken into account when we afterwards came to assess the value of his freehand exercise. The examinations, conducted in this way for the first time, were carried through with the utmost smoothness, and we have to thank teachers, parents, and the local newspapers for their co-operation and support.

We received applications for examination from 365 candidates, of whom only five were absent. Of the 360 that presented themselves, 180 obtained certificates of proficiency, 113 satisfied the requirements for Standard VI certificates of competency, and 67 failed. At eight small schools that were at an inconvenient distance from any of the selected centres or to which our annual visit was paid within a few days of the date of the central examinations, we examined the Sixth Standard pupils as in former years. These schools had 13 pupils in Standard VI, of whom 1 was absent, 2 gained certificates of proficiency and 6 certificates of competency, and 4 failed. The total number of certificates of proficiency gained was 182, and of competency 119—that is, about 49 per cent. of the 372 pupils examined gained the higher qualification and 32 per cent. the lower.

Our classification of the schools according to the degree of satisfaction with which they are fulfilling their proper functions is as follows: Good to very good, 28 schools, with 3,561 pupils; satisfactory, 25 schools, with 989 pupils; fair, 18 schools, with 534 pupils; moderate, 5 schools, with 111 pupils. Of a total of 76 schools examined, 53, with 4,550 pupils, are in a satisfactory condition, the remaining 23 schools, with 645 pupils, ranking below satisfactory. The corresponding figures last year were 54 schools, with 4,582 pupils, and 22 schools, with 567 pupils. With two exceptions the schools that failed to reach the satisfactory stage are single-handed schools. This is the class of school in which we have very frequent changes of teachers, and for which when a vacancy occurs the Board has the greatest difficulty in finding suitable applicants. For recent appointments we are pleased to note that a better class of candidate has been offering. Young men and women who served in our schools as pupil-teachers are returning to the district after spending two years at a training college and are now seeking employment. With their special training and equipment they should be able to render valuable service, and we hope the small schools that have had to put up for too long a time with the untrained and uncertificated may receive a share of this service.

In passing under review the kind of work done in the most important subjects of the syllabus we have first to deal with reading. With regard to the reading of those we examined for Sixth Standard certificates we are pleased to report that it was on the whole very satisfactory. The pupils in general read with fluency and ease, and a good many, with clear insight and keen appreciation of the author's meaning, revealed qualities of tone and expression that made it a real pleasure to listen to them. If the larger schools are excepted, this estimate of the reading does not hold good to anything like the same extent in the middle and lower standards. In these we frequently find the pupils reading in a most laboured fashion, without enjoyment to themselves and with positive pain to the listeners. Apparently some teachers think the remedy for this is to keep the pupils pounding away at the same lessons till they are word-perfect in them and blind to everything else. Since a cure has not been effected in this way in spite of all the energy that has been expended to make it a success, surely some other plan might be adopted, one which some of our teachers, though at first doubting the expediency of the experiment, have tried and are now entirely satisfied with. They give the children much more to read than formerly, not hard stuff nor necessarily instructive stuff, but such tales, simply told and boldly illustrated, as have always been the delight of children. For a few shillings a year every school might have a fine collection for the children to use, not as a distasteful task, but as a pleasant recreation. There is a wide field for selection, as the great publishing-houses vie with one another in putting on the market bright and interesting books suited to pupils from the infant classes right up through all the standards. The wider reading-course we advocate would do much to clear away many of the difficulties that beset the children in comprehending the language of the prescribed "readers," for it is an every-day experience that the child that reads most gives least trouble to the teacher in this matter.

In most of our schools we have found the spelling and dictation exercises very well done. A falling-away from accuracy in this subject, when the test is confined to one of the reading-books in use, must always reflect on the teacher's discipline and industry.

At one of the meetings of the local institute a lively discussion took place with regard to the merits of the "upright" and the "sloping" styles of handwriting. The paper that gave rise to the discussion was prepared by a teacher of great experience who strongly favoured writing slightly sloping in character, and his views found favour with the majority. One of the minority, who favours the "upright" style, produced at the meeting a bundle of specimens done ten or twelve years ago in the school of the reader of the paper who was then an apostle of the "upright." He was struck, as all were, by their excellence, and frankly confessed that had the same standard of

excellence been maintained in his school up to the present, he would not have sought to change. One lesson may be learned from this incident—whatever style may be adopted, if it is to be successful, it must be taught with earnestness and untiringly supervised. The well-kept copybooks and neatness of the written exercises generally in many schools are evidence of such teaching and supervision; but there are still a fair number of schools in which too little importance seems to be attached to the acquirement of excellence in writing. As to the complaints of business men that boys do not write so well as they used to do, it is some comfort to reflect that their predecessors had the same thing to say when the complainants of to-day were the schoolboys of that earlier time.

In many of our schools oral composition in the infant-classes and lower standards is receiving more attention than formerly, and in many instances a gratifying measure of success has been achieved. The improvement is most marked in those schools where the wider reading-course has been adopted and where the lessons in nature-study are outstanding features of the school-work. When we come to consider the work of the upper standards we have reason to be satisfied with the way in which most of our teachers have set themselves to grapple with the difficulty of training their pupils in written composition. As a consequence of the intelligent treatment of the subject we have found improvement especially noticeable in the essay-writing of the Sixth Standard. We would direct the attention of some teachers to a point that has seemingly been overlooked in the preparation of their Sixth Standard pupils—namely, that they are to be trained to write simple business letters. The need of a few special lessons in this branch of the work was apparent in the crude and unintentionally discourteous terms in which such letters were frequently couched.

In the teaching of number very good work is done in the infant-classes, and the results of our tests in Standards I, II, and III are generally very satisfactory. The pupils of Standard IV have not shown to advantage, and those of Standard V make a less satisfactory appearance than those in any of the other standards. In Standard VI 73 per cent. of those examined passed in arithmetic. With one notable exception, where every pupil passed, the large schools fared rather worse than the other schools, the percentage of passes being 69. As we have often pointed out, the country children of the Sixth Standard are generally more rapid workers than the scholars of large classes in town schools, and on the whole they are more accurate. We leave the solution of this state of matters as a problem for town teachers.

In a fair number of schools good work was done in mathematical and physical geography (Course A), the teachers realising that the value of the lessons mainly depended on the extent to which their treatment of the subject was based upon the actual observation of natural phenomena by the children. Many teachers, mainly through lack of training and sometimes for want of knowledge, failed to make use of this method of treatment, and, relying on the contents of some tiny text-book, gave the children only words and bewilderment. In the political geography (Course B) the children made use of Nelson's "The World and its People," and in their reading from this and from the *School Journal* they had opportunities of acquiring some knowledge of notable places in their own and other lands. For use in the schools the Board has purchased five stereoscopes, with a very large number of views of places of interest in the Dominion. We wish it had been fifty instead of five. With such aids to teaching the lesson in geography will surely be a delight.

In dealing with history and civic instruction teachers have mainly depended on the use of history readers, the reading being supplemented by explanation and questions on the subject-matter. We would remind the teacher that it is essential, before a history lesson begins, to have the map displayed, so that the places of interest referred to in the text may be pointed out without loss of time. Had we not frequently noticed the absence of the map during the progress of the lessons, it might be superfluous to suggest its use in this way. For instruction in civics some teachers have found splendid material in "The Citizen Reader" (New Zealand edition), a copy of which every teacher should have.

In the large schools regular courses of lessons in elementary science and nature-study have been satisfactorily carried out. The most interesting lessons have been given in the schools where the children have shared in the cultivation of the school gardens. In about a dozen schools during the past year cottage-gardening has been taken as one of the subjects for which grants are earned under the Manual and Technical Instruction Acts; and it is most gratifying to report how successfully the gardens are managed. Indeed, some of the gardens are worth going a long way to see, and the exhibits from them have been a feature in the annual shows of local horticultural societies. Besides the schools in which cottage-gardening is recognised as a school subject, quite as many others have flower-gardens under the care of the children, among whom the desire that each should have the prettiest plot creates and fosters a friendly rivalry in a most delightful and health-giving hobby.

Handwork in various forms finds a place in the programme of a large proportion of the schools, and many very good specimens of brushwork and plasticine modelling are shown. We note with pleasure the increase in the number of pupils taking carton and cardboard work, the practice in this affording an excellent training in neatness and accuracy, and laying a sure foundation for the clear understanding of the mensuration of surfaces and simple solids. Very good work continues to be done in the woodwork classes, and some remarkably fine isometric drawing is shown by the boys attending these classes. We have now two specially trained teachers of cookery engaged in teaching girls of the Fifth and Sixth Standards at several centres. Their classes are skilfully managed, and are deservedly popular.

The military drill of the cadets calls for a special word of praise—in fact, one or two of the companies go through the movements with a precision and cleanness of action seldom attained by any but "regulars." In all the schools physical drill is practised, the best results being obtained in the schools where for five or ten minutes each day both boys and girls go through the exercises in the open air.

In eight schools singing is not taught. In some of the others the singing is not very pleasant to listen to, but even in these credit is due for the attempt to brighten the school day with a song. In a large proportion of the schools fairly good singing is heard, and in all the large schools the upper classes give part-songs with very good effect. Even where the singing is best, we fear sight-reading of simple pieces is not one of the accomplishments the scholars have acquired, and yet it would not be too much to expect that they should have attained to this degree of skill before their school days are over.

In our last report we called attention to the regulation that requires the head teacher to draw up schemes of work for all the classes in his school, to examine the classes at fixed periods, and to keep a record of the nature and results of these examinations. The part of this regulation that apparently gives most trouble is the drawing-up of the schemes of work. The syllabus of instruction was purposely made wide to cover the needs of all grades of schools, and it is each teacher's business to draw up his programme within the limits of the syllabus to suit his own particular school. To do this well requires time and forethought, and the suitability of his programme may well be taken as one of the best tests of the teacher's skill in managing his school. There are still a fairly large number of teachers who must feel that they have not given us much chance of appraising their skill at any high value when this standard of measurement is applied.

We desire to place on record our appreciation of the efforts that have been made by certain uncertificated teachers to gain their certificates, and to congratulate many of our certificated teachers on the success they have achieved in examinations entitling them to a higher grade of certificate. Themselves learners, they will assuredly have more sympathy with those they are teaching, and running streams are ever more wholesome than stagnant pools.

We have, &c.,

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A., }
A. BELL, M.A., } Inspectors.

The Chairman, Education Board, South Canterbury.

OTAGO.

SIR,— Education Office, Dunedin, 8th February, 1908.

We have the honour to present our general report for the year 1907.

The following table shows the number of pupils on the roll, the number present at the annual visit, and the average age of each class.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	343	321	15 1
" VI	1,466	1,439	13 9
" V	2,025	1,941	12 11
" IV	2,218	2,153	12 0
" III	2,337	2,267	11 2
" II	2,190	2,145	9 11
" I	2,192	2,130	8 11
Preparatory	6,478	5,876	6 10
Totals	19,249	18,272	11 4*

* Mean of average ages.

The table shows a decrease in the roll-number of nearly 0·9 per cent., more than a third of it being in Standard VII.

Of the pupils who were present in Standard VI, 66 per cent. obtained the certificate of proficiency.

We group the schools according to efficiency as follows: Good to very good, 43 per cent.; satisfactory, 47 per cent; fair, 9 per cent.; weak or very weak, 1 per cent. Compared with that of 1906, this grouping shows a decline of 7 per cent. in the first grade, and a rise of 5 per cent. in the second, and of 2 per cent. in the third. The percentage in the last grade is the same as that of 1906. The results indicate in a general way the extent to which the schools suffered from the epidemics that prevailed during a large part of the first half of the year, when a large number of schools were closed for several weeks, and both before and after closing suffered from poor attendance for some weeks more. In most cases the majority of the pupils were unaffected by the epidemics, and the schools were closed mainly because the absence of a large proportion of the children for several weeks would, it was thought, operate adversely on the staffing and the revenues of the schools. It is a thousand pities that it should be possible for the invasion of an epidemic to deprive of any of their education those who are able to attend school.

The efficiency of some of the schools was no doubt affected by the circumstance that to keep them open the Board had to employ a large number of uncertificated teachers.

Mean Efficiency Marks in Subjects. — Compulsory subjects: English—Reading and history, satisfactory; composition, fair; spelling, good; writing, good; recitation, satisfactory; mean of

English, satisfactory: arithmetic, fair; drawing, good; singing, satisfactory; physical instruction, good; geography, satisfactory; history, satisfactory; mean of compulsory subjects, satisfactory. Additional subjects: Nature-study and science, satisfactory; handwork, satisfactory; geography, satisfactory; history, good; needlework, very good; mean of additional subjects, satisfactory. In explanation of the terms used it may be mentioned that "fair" indicates 50 to 59 per cent. of the attainable marks; "satisfactory," 60 to 67 per cent.; "good," 68 to 75 per cent.; "very good," 76 to 80 per cent.

What we said in our last general report about too easy promotion from Standard IV to Standard V and from Standard V to Standard VI still holds, especially in arithmetic and English, weakness in which continues to press very heavily on the teachers of Standard V and Standard VI in large schools, and to be a hindrance to pleasurable and efficient work in small.

The number of schools presenting a Standard VII class continues to decline. In 1905 it was 70; in 1906, 46; and in 1907, 37. Of the thirty-seven classes, seven were absent on examination-day, and six had been instructed only in Standard VI work. The following indicates our judgment of the efficiency of the remaining twenty-four: Very good, 3; good, 6; satisfactory, 7; fair, 7; weak, 1.

It is probable that, had the absent classes been present, they would have found themselves placed in the category "weak."

Our reports on the work done in the secondary classes of the district high schools are given in a separate paper. There is in most of them room for improvement in the treatment of English.

We preface our remarks on the subjects of instruction with one or two maxims that seem to us not to be sufficiently respected: In every department of work both teacher and taught should have a clear realisation of the end sought to be attained, and the end should be worthy. A definite aim is necessary to the teacher for purposes of preparation and presentation, and a worthy aim to the pupils for purposes of motive and interest. Without definite aim there is no well-ordered presentation of work, without motive no interest, without interest no adequate stimulus to exertion, without exertion no adequate training. What, for example, is the end sought in the teaching of English? It is to develop capacity to understand and enjoy the expressed thought of others, capacity to express one's own thought adequately in spoken and written speech, and capacity to explore and exploit the accumulated experience of the ages in the language in which it is enshrined in our literature. This is the end to be kept steadily in view by teacher and taught, and the end is worthy. To what extent our methods tend to realise this ideal will appear as we proceed. We say "tend to," for we recognise that with children who leave us at about fourteen the complete realisation of the ideal is out of the question. Still, unless we reach we shall not grasp, and our grasp will be in proportion to our reach.

Reading in the sense of power instantly to associate groups of printed symbols with their spoken sounds is generally good, but reading in the higher sense of associating printed symbols with what they symbolize, though improving, still lags behind what is attainable. Nevertheless, this power is the chief end of teaching the technique of reading. Infinite pains are taken to secure "expressive" reading, but the expression is too often attained not by the personal effort of the children to find by a study of its sense the mode in which a passage should be expressed, but by imitating the too abundant "model reading" of the teacher. A good thing overdone or done out of season may and often does become a bad thing. "Model reading" in moderation is no doubt a good thing, but it should invariably follow the effort of the child to render the sense as he conceives it, and only when the pupil's reading shows misconception of the sense. Understanding within the limits of the reader's power must precede interpretation, and therefore the pupil should not be expected to read a passage aloud before he has tried to determine its meaning; and, in the senior classes, this silent preparation for reading aloud will occupy much more time than the actual reading to the teacher. It is, however, useless to tell a pupil to prepare a passage (as many teachers do) without showing him how and what to prepare. The essential elements of good reading are correct pronunciation and distinct enunciation, correct phrasing and emphasis, and such voice-modulation as will express the intellectual or the emotional effect intended to be produced by the thought expressed in the passage set for preparation. Correct pronunciation, distinct enunciation, and suitable voice-modulation will give little trouble if the teacher is careful in his own speech, and insists upon clear and well-expressed utterance in the oral composition of his school. The latter is fundamental, for no one can become a good reader without first learning to express himself well in spoken speech. Correct phrasing and emphasis depend on understanding, the determining factor being the "picture element" or the "idea element" of the passage read. Pause between the mental pictures is the general direction, with the further direction that the length of the pause must be determined by the degree of closeness of connection between the pictures and the massiveness of the pictures. Here the appeal is not to the printed stops, which have little to do with reading, but to the intellect, the child's power to visualise the images symbolized by words and groups of words, and to see them in their relation to each other. When this result is achieved the question of phrasing and emphasis is easily determined, and the child is prepared to read aloud to his teacher—that is, to express aloud in the author's words the meaning or emotion he thinks the author intended them to express. Here and there his interpretation may be wrong; but it is his own, honestly come by and honestly expressed, not a showy pretence, but a genuine intellectual performance.

In most schools spelling is very good, but it is generally regarded not as an instrument of written expression, but as an end in itself. Since it is only for the written expression of thought that the forms of words are worth learning, it is surely irrational to make children learn the spelling of words they are unable to use in written expression. The realities of things are more

important than the forms, and ignorance of the meaning and use of a word should be regarded as a more serious defect than ignorance of its form. Whatever the study may be, without the ideas represented the words representing them go for very little; they are at best dead knowledge, mere lumber that the mind, finding no use for it, refuses to retain. The time wasted in spelling-drill is lamentable. Half of it would, we believe, produce better results, even in spelling, if the children were first trained to use the words in spoken speech, then to look intently at their forms, and finally to use them in written speech. Notwithstanding its perversity, the spelling of English gives little trouble to those who have something to say, and are accustomed to say it adequately in writing. If the children could use the words of their reading-books half as well as they can spell them it would be an immense gain to the intellectual and emotional life of the schools. We are all to blame—the public, Education Department, Inspectors, teachers (the last least of all), for we have failed to realise the true relation of spelling to expression.

Dictation as a means of learning the arts of composition is too little practised, the exercise being generally regarded simply as a test in spelling, and the children being required to think of nothing but the accurate reproduction of the words and stops dictated by the teacher. No mental exercise is of much value that does not make the mind work hard, and a dictation exercise that does not compel the pupils to consider the meaning and logical connection of the parts of what is dictated does not make it work hard. To make it an intellectual exercise in the orderly expression of consecutive thought the passage should be dictated without punctuation and without suggestion of punctuation, and the children thereafter set to use their imagination and reason to discover, first, where the main statements begin and end, and the relation of the statements to each other as principal units in the expression of the matter of the passage; and, second, the relation of the subordinate parts of their principals. They should then put capitals and stops in accordance with their analysis of the thought, compare their own work with that printed in the book, and try to discover the reason for the difference (if any) between their own interpretation and that of the author of the passage, the teacher meanwhile passing round and helping where he finds need for it. Constant practice of this kind would keep spelling in touch with the expression of thought, develop taste and feeling for good literary structure, induce capacity for sustained and connected thought, and lay a sound foundation for original composition and literary appreciation.

The efficiency mark for composition is low, and low it will remain until we set ourselves a higher ideal of what constitutes adequate self-expression in both oral and written speech, and realise more fully the factors that make for its attainment. What are the essential factors? They are matter, language, and form — that is, something to say, language with which to express it adequately, and knowledge of the forms in which the language must be cast to express it in accordance with English idiom. Matter is not to seek; it is furnished by experience and by every subject of the school course, and it is not lacking in the children. Language, however, is often lacking, lacking because little serious effort is made to acquire it; and grammar or form is nearly what the Department intended it to become in the schools—namely, dead as a door-nail. If the question of form is considered at all by the children, it is generally determined not by reason, but by feeling or by guessing. This we know from the circumstance that not one in ten of them can explain why one form is right and another wrong, one faulty and another faultless. They have no body of positive knowledge of form to enable them to determine rationally between the claims of competing forms of expression, and are therefore reduced to the plight of guessing when they have to make a choice. They ought not to be reduced to this condition of impotence, and that they are is due partly to the invertebrate character of the syllabus of composition and partly to the standard and kind of work set by the Department in the composition-cards it has allowed to be scattered broadcast over the Dominion. Teachers, and especially inexperienced teachers, are naturally prone to follow the Department's lead, and in this case its lead is, in our opinion, a very bad one. To us it is an ugly fact that the children leave our schools deplorably ignorant of the grammar of their mother-tongue.

In Standards I, II, and III arithmetic is generally good, and sometimes excellent; in Standard IV it is generally fair; but in Standard V and Standard VI it is often weak, and seldom good. The test questions for Standard III to Standard VI are drawn and issued by the Department. Those for Standard IV to Standard VI are, very properly, so drawn as to test the children's intelligence, and seldom involve difficulties that can reasonably be regarded as beyond the capacity of well-instructed pupils of average ability. Nevertheless, they year by year prove stumbling-blocks to a large proportion of the children. The subject is certainly well presented by the teachers, whose illustrations, expositions, and blackboard demonstrations ought to be convincing to every one able to interpret the language used and possessing explicit knowledge of the principles involved in the reasoned steps of the work. Ability to interpret the language and explicit knowledge of the principles are precisely the equipment that is wanting in many pupils, who are therefore unable to contribute their share to the argument developed by their teachers. They, like ourselves, see in a thing what they bring to see in it, neither more nor less; and, if they are unable to bring right mental images of the things symbolized by the words of what is set for solution and of the effect of arithmetical operations on the quantities involved, they can profit little even from the best of presentations. Clear mental vision of things in their quantative relation, and of the effect of arithmetical operations on this relation, is the condition of sound work in arithmetic, and without it the subject is devoid of culture-value—that is, does not yield a training in interpretation and orderly reasoned expression. From the point of view of culture the answer is of no importance whatever, and therefore the dominating thought in the child's mind ought ever to be not "What rule shall I apply to get the answer?" but "What is the meaning of the question, and how can I best express my conception of it, and order the steps by means of which I can offer an intelligently expressed solution?" Many of us have yet to realise that the study of arithmetic is

a study in English, and that English is the key to the door of every department of the kingdom of knowledge.

Geography bears very heavily on Standard VI, partly because in Standard II to Standard V, though there is observation of facts in plenty, there is little effort made to formulate and memorise brief generalisations of what the facts teach, and partly because much of the mathematical geography prescribed is very difficult to children of thirteen or fourteen years of age. When the syllabus was introduced we expressed the opinion that much of the mathematical geography is too difficult for the children of primary schools, and experience has not tended to modify our judgment. Moreover, it consumes more time than it is worth, and elbows out other departments of geography that are well within the comprehension of the children, and knowledge of which would be of greater value to them as members of an empire that marches with and lives in human relations with nearly every country of the world. What is of worth and interest to them is not "latitude as an angle and an arc," not "arguing the annual revolution of the earth round the sun from the varying position of stars in the northern sky or the Southern Cross from month to month," not "a comparison of inferences derived from" the study of remote terrestrial and celestial phenomena, but the story of the great heritage won for them by the energy and pluck and blood of their fathers. Again, we seem to have forgotten how essential memorising is in the learning of every subject in which expression plays an important part — intelligent memorising, of course, not learning by rote what is unintelligible to the learner. Observe the facts in their relation, formulate the law that expresses this relation, learn the law—in other words, first understand and then commit to memory—that is the way to furnish the mind with something to work with. In what other way can mental content be economically built up and made efficient? Time was when there was too much appeal to the memory; now the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme, and by some it is regarded almost as a crime to appeal to it at all. The modern doctrine that the verbal memory may be disregarded without detriment to mental efficiency is working much mischief in every department of work. To be readily available for use, mental content must be wedded to words; and the more perfect we make the union the greater will be our mental efficiency.

We are glad to be able to report favourably on the work done in most of the school gardens, of which we have sixty-one in full operation, and on much of the work done in elementary science, nature-study, woodwork, cookery, cardboard-work, paper-folding, brushwork, &c. If newspaper correspondents and public speakers would visit the schools and make personal inspection of what is done in these departments of work, and of the manner in which it is done, they would be surprised to see how widely the real school-world differs from what, if we may judge from their words, they imagine it to be. The revelation would, we venture to say, extort from them the confession that the facts do not support their conclusions, and that, after all, we cannot be so much behind their models—America, France, and Germany—as they had fondly imagined. It is not our way to proclaim our doings from the housetop; all the same, they are not unworthy; and that they are not is largely due to the teachers, who have, at great inconvenience and with much labour, utilised to the full every facility provided by the Board to enable them to master the technique of the many kinds of manual work now taught in the schools. They have done wonders, and deserve ungrudged praise.

Freehand drawing is generally good, and so is much of the design-work. If, however, we may take the National Scholarship papers as an indication of what should be achieved in drawing to scale in Standard V, we are bound to conclude that more attention should be given to it in all standards. In many schools drawing is not so fully correlated with other work as is desirable.

In most schools the precepts of hygiene receive due attention, but in not a few practice is often at variance with precept. Example is more potent than precept; and it is a poor compliment to intelligence to preach the virtues of soap and water and duster and broom in rooms the walls and ceiling and furniture of which are loaded with dust and dirt, and the floors of which are swept only twice or thrice a week. Too many of our schools and out-offices are offensively dirty, and few schools are as clean as they should be. We are strongly in favour of such medical inspection of school-children as is advocated by the Chief Health Officer, Dr. Mason, and the District Health Officer, Dr. Ogston, to the latter of whom the teachers of New Zealand are indebted for a very useful pamphlet on school hygiene. If they follow its simple directions they can do much for the children without extraneous aid. They can, for example, test sight and hearing, and take height and chest measurements; and, if they were provided with a weighing-machine, as they ought to be, they could weigh the children at suitable intervals. A record of such measurements made throughout the Dominion and extending over a long course of years would be of inestimable value. Still, there is much they cannot do, partly because of the susceptibilities of parents, but mainly because of lack of skill and knowledge. One of the chief things to determine is the physical and mental fitness of the children to do the work imposed upon them in the schools, and this can be determined only by the medical expert.

We regret to say that few School Committees have yet taken steps to establish school libraries. Many of them every year spend considerable sums of money in picnics and prizes, money that would buy hundreds of volumes of the English classics now published at from sixpence to eighteenpence a volume. The Dunedin and suburban Committees have set a fine example in many things: will they not take the lead in this?

We have, &c.,

P. Goyen,
W. S. Fitzgerald,
C. R. Richardson,
C. R. Bossence,
} Inspectors.

The Chairman, Education Board, Otago.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Invercargill, 19th March, 1908.

We have the honour to present our report for the year ended 31st December, 1907.

One hundred and sixty-five public and eight Catholic schools were examined, but, owing to the fact that many duties incidental to our Department, but more or less unconnected with the formal work of inspection and examination, made heavy demands on our time, we found it impossible to inspect all the schools in the district, as required by the departmental regulations.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	201	178	14 10
" VI	789	768	13 8
" V	983	945	12 10
" IV	1,175	1,129	12 1
" III	1,191	1,141	10 11
" II	1,209	1,168	9 11
" I	1,084	1,031	8 10
Preparatory	3,273	2,969	7 0
Totals	9,905	9,329	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

Reviewing the year's operations broadly, we are able to say that the teachers, with very few exceptions, have been entirely conscientious in the discharge of their duties, and that, notwithstanding serious interruptions due to epidemics and other untoward circumstances, encouraging progress has been made in the work of primary education in this district. Though comparative deductions from statistics are apt to be misleading, the favourable opinion above expressed receives some indorsement from the fact that the percentage of pupils that qualified for proficiency certificates is slightly higher than for the preceding year.

We regret exceedingly that the time available for the work of inspection in this district is now too limited to enable even one unannounced visit to be paid to all the schools under the Board's jurisdiction; for it seems clear to us that inspection visits, while useful in the main as affording opportunities for friendly conferences between Inspectors and teachers, must, if they are to be wholly effective, remain as far as possible not only in name, but in reality "visits of surprise." It is the duty of the Inspector no doubt, by advice, by encouragement, by precept and sympathy, to make the most of the natural and acquired powers of every teacher in the Board's service; it is equally his duty, when all these moral forces fail, to report to the Board idleness, incompetence, and incapacity; and both duties, in our opinion, can best be fulfilled as the results of visits paid without notice previously given, either officially or unofficially. The good teacher, who has his arrangements for the year well in hand, will not resent—nay, will rather welcome—such visits; while the careless or procrastinating teacher may be inspired in time with a wholesome horror of detection. But since, unfortunately, our time was too limited to allow of the inspection of every school in the district, we devoted the greater part of the time available to visiting schools in charge of young and more or less inexperienced teachers. It was not, of course, possible to spend more than one day in each of the smaller schools, but we felt strongly that a single day rarely sufficed to do all that the circumstances rendered desirable, or that the departmental regulations prescribe. A few hours are quite inadequate for observing methods, criticizing defects, and giving lessons to illustrate the proper educational aim of every subject. In some cases where young teachers were found to be altogether at sea arrangements were made for their attendance at other schools of similar grade, but under more competent management. In this way much good resulted. Indeed, so convinced are we that such visits help weak teachers very materially towards a clearer comprehension of the suggestions and criticisms made on their own work by the Inspector that we are inclined to subscribe to the proposal that every teacher should, in the course of the year, visit at least one school other than his own. There are, truly, practical difficulties to be met with in putting this scheme into operation; but the difficulties do not appear to us to be insuperable, while the good that would accrue, even to the capable teacher, is undoubted.

In a district such as Southland, where, exclusive of pupil-teachers, five out of every twelve teachers do not hold a departmental certificate, and are either quite untrained or only partially trained, the efforts made in the schools to cope with the provisions of the syllabus exhibit great disparity of results. The more intelligent teachers—and they are by no means a minority—have realised that the syllabus places in their hands a potent instrument for good, and have been stimulated to fresh study of a kind that is rich in promise for the future. There is evidence that these teachers are getting into more sympathetic touch with their pupils, and that the children themselves are finding school life pleasanter than it used to be—and certainly not less profitable because it is pleasanter. Other teachers, however—some of whom, we regret to say, rank fairly well in the list of certificated teachers—are slow in breaking away from old traditions; and, forgetting that

the teacher that ceases to be a learner ceases to be the best kind of teacher, neglect such opportunities of self-improvement as have already come within their reach. Having gained their certificates they sit back content to apply only the methods of past experience, and take but little account of the progress of educational practice.

But the untrained, uncertificated teacher furnishes an especially difficult problem, and we sincerely trust that the time is not far distant when our training colleges will supply us with teachers fully competent to meet present-day conditions and to keep pace with modern educational requirements. Though several of these young people, we are pleased to say, exhibit more real teaching ability than others already hall-marked by the Department, and though almost without exception they import into their work considerable zeal and enthusiasm, still few of them possess that degree of professional knowledge and general culture which gives the teacher confidence in himself, and which, under present conditions, is absolutely essential for the successful conduct of even the smallest primary school. With them "training the children" is simply a matter of "making the children learn": they fail to realise, or they are too immature to realise that the value of the instruction is measured not by the number of facts communicated to the pupils, but by the habits of thoughtful inquiry and careful observation, as well as by the spirit of self-reliance that should be developed in the acquisition of knowledge. But the special difficulty that meets the untrained teacher is that concerned with the classification of his school. Individual examination is generally supposed to be a thing of the past. Under the circumstances just referred to, however, the Board will not be surprised to learn that it still prevails to a fairly large extent, and necessarily so, for where such a large number of our teachers are so poorly equipped for their work, it would be the height of folly to intrust to them the important duty of classification. So fully, indeed, do they realise this fact that in most cases they gladly welcome the Inspector's assistance. But it is not the inexperienced teacher only whose classification has to be revised, or even entirely determined by the Inspector. We take this opportunity of expressing our profound regret that a good many well-qualified teachers show a decided disinclination to wield the powers intrusted to them by the Regulations for the Inspection and Examination of Schools. Sometimes the examination schedules are handed to us with no indication whatever of the teacher's intention as to promotion; sometimes, again, with indications so vague as to be practically valueless. It has been so long and so ably argued that a qualified teacher is a much better judge of his pupils' abilities than is an Inspector, that when we find such a teacher unwilling to undertake the work of classification prescribed for him, we naturally seek for reasons for such a peculiar course of action. In our judgment the general public and the weak-kneed teacher are both at fault. The general public (considered as individual fathers and mothers) still think that yearly promotion from class to class is the only absolutely trustworthy criterion of educational results; the weak-kneed teacher is afraid to undeceive them, and is, moreover, determined that if there must be a bogey-man in the question it shall be the Inspector. We confess to an uncomfortable suspicion that unless teachers bravely and loyally face their responsibilities in this matter we shall have to revert sooner or later to the treadmill of individual examination.

If we were asked to select from amongst the numerous subjects of our curriculum one, and one only—by the results in which the quality of the whole teaching of a school might be fairly gauged—we should unhesitatingly name composition. The keenness and width of observation developed by nature-study and observational geography, the accuracy of statement and logical arrangement of facts necessitated by arithmetic and science; the sense of proportion engendered by drawing; the spirit of patriotism invoked by history; the interest in all things human awakened by the reading-lesson—these are all more or less clearly reflected in the written compositions of the schools, which are also obviously incidental tests in spelling and writing. The vocabulary of the child, too—no mean part of its equipment for the battle of life—is therein displayed; and upon the skill shown in its disposition and use will depend much of the success to be attained in mature life. As an important vehicle of self-expression the essay ranks high. Where the education of a child is being successfully conducted it reveals originality, self-reliance, and reverence for truth, and is the index of a mind fully and accurately informed on the common topics of the day.

Considering all this, it is with some sense of disappointment that we state that the work in this important subject in a good many of our schools falls far short of the high ideal indicated above.

Passing in review the leading faults of the composition exercises, we should like to mention, first, one which was duly noted in our last annual report—their puerility. Now, none could be more averse to the use of stilted language and intricate grammatical construction by children, none more pleased to note the persistence of natural modes of expression as of natural modes of life throughout youth than we. It must be pointed out, however, that the language and style of a child of eight ought not to remain the language of the same child at the age of leaving school. Progress is surely a moral necessity at all ages.

Again, the range of subjects is, in many cases, much too limited; we have observed again and again inability to write compositions on any but the most trivial, commonplace, and hackneyed topics. In the higher standards there is often found an almost entire ignorance of the most striking questions of the day—moral, political, and social. This latter weakness may spring in part from a mistaken notion that it is an educational crime to impart information. There is a large element of truth in this notion, for the main duty of the teacher is doubtless to assist in the development of the whole nature of the child by encouraging it in suitable forms of activity, as nearly as possible spontaneous. But there are certain facts, some of them of vital importance to the interests of the child, that cannot be reached by the most skilful use of heuristic methods. It is the bounden duty of the teacher to place the child in possession of such facts by whatever means are available, since in such cases the fact is of much more importance than the method by which a knowledge of it has been attained.

As to the means for improving composition in our schools, it is a well-known fact that the child who reads much writes well. This furnishes us at once with a plea for more school libraries of the right sort, and for more silent reading (with the aid of a dictionary, if necessary) in the upper standards. More systematic correlation of composition with the other standard subjects is to be commended; complete correlation is, of course, impossible, and, we may add, undesirable. Intelligence should be cultivated in the reading lesson, too—less by the dry-as-dust method of explaining isolated words and phrases than by seeing that the whole contents of a passage is being thoroughly grasped and retained. There should also be exercises to increase the range and variety of the child's vocabulary, and that, too, from the beginning of school life. Formal analysis and synthesis should not be restricted to answering the questions on test-cards, but should receive practical application in the written composition. There should be in all standards more practice in the oral reproduction of lessons; and that this exercise may tax the constructive ability of the child, the continual intervention of the teacher in suggestive questions is to be avoided.

To meet the wants of those children who are not encouraged to read at home, and to some extent of others also, the teacher need not be afraid to give his pupils interesting accounts of the chief events taking place outside their limited horizon. Finally, in this, as in all other school-work, success can come only as the result of plans skilfully laid and rigorously carried out.

Speaking generally, we can say that the reading in our schools shows some improvement in expression, fluency, and volume. This we attribute to the larger amount of practice in the art consequent on the use of supplementary readers. Nevertheless comparatively few children, even in the higher classes, read in their natural tone of voice. Frequently the pitch is unnaturally high, and, except in a limited number of schools, articulation and phrasing are still faulty. But, though we believe that in regard to the mechanical parts of the subject some advance has been made, we are convinced that the educative value of the reading-lesson has not yet been fully realised by many of our teachers. It is not unusual to find a teacher conducting a lesson in, say, arithmetic, while the members of another class "go on reading." Such a teacher, it is apparent, does not appreciate the potency of the reading-lesson as an educative instrument, nor has he learned that during its progress it will brook no sharing with any other subject of his attention, energies, and resource.

There has been a tendency on the part of some teachers to pay much less attention than formerly to spelling, but in the majority of schools the spelling generally, and particularly words in common use, has received considerable attention. The intelligent use of word-building has greatly aided the work in this exercise, especially in the lower classes. A fuller extension of this principle to the teaching of spelling in the higher classes is again urged on teachers.

The desirableness of employing pupils in the solution of practical problems in arithmetic likely to be met with in after-life, and free from undue complexity, is gaining recognition among teachers. But there is still an undue amount of time spent in mere mechanical operations, and many teachers cannot make up their minds to limit the work in the lower classes to the range of the numbers specified. The obviously and grotesquely wrong answers which are handed in not only to the Inspectors on examination-day, but to the teacher in the ordinary course of work, surely suggests that children should be encouraged to give a few minutes' thought to a problem before beginning to solve it, and especially in the upper classes, to make rough mental approximations by way of testing results. Except in a very few instances, we have little evidence that this suggestion has come home to teachers. In our annual report of last year we noted that, in a good many cases, common weights and measures had apparently no connection with realities. Though we believe that this reproach has been in some degree removed, we would again strongly advise that the foot-rule, tape-line, imitation coins, quart-pot, scales and weights, be still more extensively use for practical and illustrative purposes.

With reference to the teaching of geography, we last year alluded to the lack of sufficient evidence of actual appeal to nature. Our experience during the year just ended constrains us to report that in many cases at least our suggestions have been less fruitful than we hoped. The real aims of geographical teaching, and the value of the subject as a potent instrument by which the pupils' powers of judging and reasoning may be developed are often entirely lost sight of, with the result that the total educative outcome of the teacher's efforts, as tested on examination-day, is miserably inadequate to the time given to the subject. It is expressly laid down that the instruction in Course A should be based as far as possible on observation and experiment—that it is, in fact, a division of nature-study, and should be treated as such. Nevertheless, we too often find that young children whose elementary geographical notions should be acquired from a study of their immediate surroundings, are condemned to the painful memorising and soul-deadening repetition of (to them) meaningless definitions.

For the more effective teaching of the subject many schools are now equipped with appliances of various kinds—the shadow pole, the altometer, barometer, modelling-tray, globe, &c. Still the conviction is being forced on us that in too many cases the early enthusiasm for a rational treatment of geography exhausted itself in the effort of constructing or procuring the apparatus. For certainly the appliances are not being used systematically (not unfrequently a piece of apparatus, when demanded by the Inspector, emerges from its hiding-place, bearing a suspiciously thick accumulation of dust), and even where the length of the shadow or altitude of the sun is regularly recorded, we too often find that the pupils are unable to say why the little experiments are made, or what lessons are to be learned therefrom. Weather-records are in many schools faithfully kept, but quite insufficient use is made of the mass of material so gathered. Many teachers still make a fetish of the text-book, and fail to realise that the teaching of geography has now assumed scientific form.

The results of the teaching in Course B geography, in many of the smaller schools especially, are little more encouraging than in the case of Course A. The readers are "gone through," but

little effort apparently is made to secure by suitable means the permanent lodgment in the pupils' minds of the salient portions of the chapters read. While we are prepared to regard somewhat indulgently a pupil's ignorance of the capital town in a country with which this Dominion has but the slightest commercial relations, or of the position of a remote and insignificant island, we are surely justified in requiring that a Sixth Standard pupil, after four years' study, should possess a good knowledge of the commercial and political geography of New Zealand, Australia, and the British Empire generally, and a fair knowledge of the geography of the more important foreign countries.

Moreover, even in many cases where the facts of political and commercial geography are fairly well known, teachers fail to appreciate the object of Course B, which is to show, as far as it is possible for the minds of the children to see it, the connection between natural conditions on the earth's surface and the civilisation of man—*i.e.*, between physical geography on the one hand, and political and commercial geography on the other. The human interest of the various topics is not sufficiently dwelt on, and the teaching is apt to be too remote from the experience of the pupils and the facts of their every-day life. From a pupil who glibly enough furnishes a full list of the exports and imports of New Zealand it may be difficult to elicit a conjecture as to the probable nature, origin, and destination of the freights on the inward and outward trains that pass his school daily.

In our last annual report we had something to say respecting the schemes of work submitted to us on examination-day by teachers. The remarks we then felt constrained to make are again applicable, though probably to a smaller number of cases. But in no subjects are the schemes of work so generally unsatisfactory as are those purporting to detail the courses of study in geography, and in none is greater diversity shown, both in regard to mode of treatment of the subject and scope of work professed. While we are the last to insist that geography should receive uniform treatment in all the schools of the district, and while we fully recognise that, in the case of certain teachers the minimum of instruction required and the maximum of instruction given are convertible terms, nevertheless the conviction is being forced on us that, so long at least as geography is a compulsory subject for the proficiency certificate, the requirements, especially in respect of political and commercial geography, should be more strictly defined than they are at present.

While we have felt it to be our duty to speak somewhat strongly on this matter, we do not wish the Board to infer that the teaching of geography is unsatisfactory in all or even in a majority of the schools under its control. We are gratified to be able to say that there are many teachers in this district who make full use of the opportunities afforded by the teaching of this subject for training their pupils in scientific method, and there are others who are realising more or less rapidly the possibilities of the subject. In the case of these we doubt not that their skill in using the subject as an educative instrument will increase *pari passu* with their experience.

There are several of the newer subjects in the syllabus in regard to which much patience and forbearance have necessarily to be exercised. Nature study may be taken as illustrative. The treatment of this subject in our schools is rarely quite satisfactory. One potent reason for this is found in the fact that many of our teachers still fail to appreciate fully the true aim of this division of school-work, which is to give the pupil the observing eye and the reflective mind. Although the formal object-lessons of old have been in almost all our schools superseded by more or less definite courses of lessons, arranged in series with more or less skill, and showing more or less correlation with the other subjects of the syllabus, and although there is now more of nature and less of text-book in the treatment of this subject than formerly, many teachers are still prone to indulge in aimless, discursive talk about natural objects instead of developing the pupils' powers of observation—to give knowledge to the child instead of guiding him to find it for himself—in short, the work is done *for* the pupil, not *by* him. The excellent plan of giving lessons out-of-doors, where the children are face to face with facts, is, as we noted in the case of geography, too rarely followed. Nevertheless, although, speaking generally, the handling of the subject leaves much to be desired, it has by no means been entirely ineffective: the general tendency of the instruction has been to give the children an intelligent interest in their immediate surroundings and to make knowledge of the familiar the basis of the knowledge of the unseen.

But another factor undoubtedly goes far to explain why so many of our teachers have fallen short of complete success in dealing with the subject of nature study in their schools: the great majority of them have had no opportunity of qualifying themselves to teach it thoroughly. Nor can there be much improvement in this respect till every teacher has gone through a practical course at the University in those subjects necessary as a basis for nature study. Indeed, not only in regard to such subjects, but in regard to all others possible, the trend of modern opinion is in favour of university training for teachers; without neglect, of course, of that practical training in school methods without which all other studies are useless. Besides adding to the teacher's breadth of view, and thus increasing his educational usefulness, a university training of greater or less extent would largely improve his status in the community, and entitle him to more serious consideration from the public than he at present receives. The abler and more foreseeing of our younger teachers are fully awake to the advantages we have enumerated, though in the ranks of the older teachers there are still some who look askance at all connection between the training college and the university. Far other is the attitude of the teachers of Scotland, who have unanimously declared themselves in favour of the training of teachers being conducted as largely as possible at the university; and of the teachers of England, who but lately remonstrated with the Board of Education for seeking to restrict to some extent the facilities for attendance at university classes which training-college students had up to that time enjoyed.

We fully recognise the great advantages teachers have derived from the establishment of Saturday classes in nature-study, botany, and geology. We must, nevertheless, point out that

these classes, however beneficial and inspiring to teachers, are poor substitutes at best for practical systematic training at university classes. The attainments of the students attending them are so diverse that no course, unless on the most elementary lines, can be suitable to all; the period of attendance is too short for the attainment of satisfactory knowledge and skill in the subjects taught, and the large size of the classes precludes the possibility of sufficient practical individual work. Still, situated as we are at present, it would be folly not to avail ourselves of the confessedly limited advantages conferred by these classes. We can only wait patiently but hopefully for the time when an improved system of training of teachers will be introduced which will render them no longer necessary.

And here it is fitting that we recognise the great benefit derived to the teachers of Southland from the course of lectures delivered during the winter months by Dr. Marshall, of Dunedin. The lectures, which dealt with the geology and physiography of Southland, were informative and stimulating; as a consequence the interest in them was lively and sustained. The results of Dr. Marshall's visit are already manifesting themselves in the work of not a few of our schools.

During the year considerable progress has been made in that branch of school activity known as manual work. Most teachers now recognise that manual work is not so much an additional subject as one by which other subjects are illustrated and exemplified. We therefore now rarely find it treated as completely isolated and detached; in most cases its correlation with other subjects is satisfactory. In almost all the infant departments some form of handwork—usually paper-folding or paper-cutting—is taken up, and work of a cognate kind is taken by pupils in the lower standard classes. But it is only in the Gore, East Gore, Invercargill, and suburban schools that the course has been so organized and developed as to lead from paper cutting and folding in the junior classes through plasticine and cardboard modelling to woodwork in the upper classes. The value of the training in woodwork that the pupils receive under Mr. Brownlie is undoubted, and evidence is furnished as to its educational work by the interest it stimulates, the inventiveness it engenders, as well as by the dexterity it cultivates.

In the case of the girls in the upper classes in the schools mentioned above, cookery takes the place of woodwork for boys. Under the capable direction of Mrs. Turner these girls study, in the school kitchen as an experimental laboratory, the laws of health so far as these relate to the preparation of food, and acquire an expertness in the art of cookery, and in at least some of the details of home-management, that cannot fail to make for the stability and happiness of family life. As in respect of woodwork, we greatly desire to see an extension of the opportunities now within reach of pupils for acquiring a knowledge of this indispensable branch of domestic science.

Twenty-two classes in elementary agriculture were in operation during the year, and in most of these fairly satisfactory work was accomplished. Both teachers and pupils evince an interest in the school gardens, and in some localities they receive the hearty sympathy and support of the parents. The instruction given in these classes will not make a pupil a farmer—it is not intended to to do so—but if it succeeds, as undoubtedly it does succeed, in developing in him a love for the beautiful, and an intelligent interest in his environments; if it gives a practical direction to nature-study, and furnishes an elementary knowledge of agricultural processes by means of practical illustrations; if it cultivates a taste for rural occupations, and a bias towards country life, then the inclusion of elementary agriculture in our school curriculum is amply justified.

We are, &c.,

JAMES HENDRY,
A. L. WYLIE, } Inspectors.

The Chairman, Education Board, Southland.

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