

our country districts. In spite of these disadvantages, the results of the examinations, both Civil Service and Matriculation, show that our secondary teachers are doing very good work. One school presented six candidates for matriculation, with a result—gratifying alike to both teachers and scholars—that all passed, the majority of them with credit. Of the secondary pupils in the district high schools, altogether about fifty either passed the Civil Service Junior Examination or obtained the right to Senior Free Places. This result is very satisfactory, more especially as the best of the primary pupils, such as the scholarship winners, are encouraged to go to the secondary schools. Further encouragement would be given to the rural course if specialized schools of agriculture were established; but at present, as far as the North Island is concerned, there is no higher institution where a student of agriculture can receive the training he requires. The itinerant teachers in these schools—Mr. Davies and Mr. Cumming in agricultural science, Mr. Grant in drawing and woodwork, and Misses Talbot, MacIntosh, and Alexander in cookery and dressmaking—have done good work; and it is to their untiring efforts that much of the improvement in the practical part of the programme is due. At the end of the March quarter the roll number of the secondary pupils of the district high schools was 347, but at the end of December it had fallen to 276, a drop of seventy-one, or about 20 per cent. during the year. Our inquiries lead us to believe that all or nearly all of the scholars leaving after only a short period in the secondary department do so in order to accept employment of some kind, and that most of them have accepted the privilege of free secondary education without any intention of taking full advantage of such privilege. As the same complaint also comes from secondary schools with both grammar-school and commercial courses, the programme of work cannot be held to be the main cause of this want of appreciation of the benefits of free secondary education. It is difficult to propose an effective remedy. One suggestion—namely, to raise the standard of proficiency—might be partly effective. It would certainly benefit those secondary schools whose main aim is a preparation for the Civil Service and Matriculation Examinations as a preliminary to some professional course, by making a better selection of material for them to work on for this purpose, but under the present system of examinations it might exclude from a technical school a scholar who would benefit both himself and the State by undergoing a course of industrial training.

School Libraries.—A gratifying response to the encouragement given by the Board in granting a subsidy on local contributions, and in publishing a suitable list of books in order to assist Committees and headmasters in making a selection, is to be seen in the general improvement in the school libraries of the district. While on the matter of libraries, we wish to remind Committees that the Department has decided to withdraw the grant previously given for free books, and to substitute instead a subsidy for school libraries, the subsidy being at the rate of 9d. per pupil for this year, to be reduced to 3d. per pupil in subsequent years.

Pictures, &c.—"You care for pictures absolutely no more than you do for the bills pasted on your dead walls. There is always room on the walls for bills to be read—never for the pictures to be seen," said Ruskin to the British public; and his advice on the education of women was "in art to keep the finest models before her." As a part of school training, the beautiful has not received with us the attention it deserves, and in this respect the British nation has been far behind the Greeks, to whom "the beautiful" and "the good" were almost synonymous terms. We cannot, perhaps, place the finest models before our children, but the Board has endeavoured to do the next best thing by forwarding copies of good pictures to many of our schools, and encouraging the Committees to frame them. An excellent choice of pictures, many of them copies of the old masters, was made in England by Mr. Lee and Mr. Tennant, and these have been framed and forwarded to different schools, with the object of familiarizing the children with certain aspects of the beautiful, and giving them some conception of human achievement in art. The result is that the walls of many of our schools now present a better appearance than formerly, but much still remains to be done. Encouragement has also been given to beautify school surroundings, and, while there is a satisfactory improvement in the general appearance of many of our country grounds, progress in this respect is not as marked as it should be.

At the beginning of the year Mr. J. S. Tennant, M.A., B.Sc., was appointed Principal of the Training College. While congratulating him on his promotion to so responsible a post, we have to express sincere regret at the severance of our long association with a colleague whose energetic and skilful co-operation and unvarying courtesy we have always highly appreciated.

We have great pleasure in welcoming to the Inspectorate Mr. F. G. Stuckey, M.A., and Mr. A. B. Charters, M.A., appointed by the Board in May. Both these gentlemen, in attainments and practical experience of primary work, are specially qualified to render valuable assistance in maintaining the educational efficiency of the district.

We have, &c.

T. R. FLEMING.

F. H. BAKEWELL.

The Chairman, Education Board, Wellington.

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Napier, 24th March, 1913.

Although the school year ended on the 31st December the work connected with the examination for certificates of proficiency was not completed until late in January. The system of examining pupils immediately preceding the midsummer vacation has the advantage of keeping the senior classes at school as long as possible, but the results are necessarily delayed longer than was customary under the old plan of examination. A report on the work of the proficiency candidates has already been submitted to the Board.