

HOME LESSONS.—In this report several references to home lessons will be found. In some cases I have commented on the total absence of any evening work; in others, on the excessive length of the tasks imposed. Being anxious not to be misunderstood on a point as to which I hold very decided opinions,—opinions that have only been confirmed by increased experience,—I will state, once for all, and as definitely as possible, what, to my thinking, should be the measure of work after school hours. Children under eight or nine years old ought not to do any tasks at all after leaving the schoolroom. The five school hours, well employed, are enough, and, in many instances, more than enough. From children between nine and twelve years old no more home work should be expected than can be fairly accomplished within an hour by scholars of average capacity. An hour and a half's work nightly is as much as should be required of scholars between twelve and fifteen. It is true that nearly twice as much as this is demanded from many children in our public schools, and, unfortunately, from many more who attend private schools, to say nothing of the institutions which, under the name of high schools and colleges, now abound in New Zealand. Notwithstanding the popularity of this system of high-pressure, with both parents and teachers, I shall venture to assert, at whatever risk of giving offence, that its prevalence merely proves one of three things—(1) Either that the teaching staff is not numerous enough to do justice to the scholars and to keep them fully employed during school hours; or (2) that the teachers do not know how to make the best use of the time at their disposal; or (3) that far too much is attempted. Probably all three causes are at work. Even in the case of boys intending to take part in the examinations for the college scholarships, the preparation for which involves the severest strain to which pupils in our primary schools are ever subjected, I maintain that the amount of night-work I have indicated is sufficient. If a master finds that an hour and a half's work nightly, steadily continued throughout a twelvemonth, does not enable any candidate to keep well abreast of his work, the teacher may reasonably conclude that he has formed a mistaken estimate of his pupil's powers, and should withdraw him from a competition that he ought never to have attempted. Whatever may be the immediate result, I believe that, in the long run, the moderate, but continuous, effort I recommend will give a better mental training than can be got from the detestable system of over-burdening the unripe brains of children, which is one of the besetting sins of the age. The sound mind in a sound body, surely the true aim of all education, will be best attained by those who have not been sacrificed to the paltry vanity of teachers and parents.

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W. C. HODGSON,

Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

1. MR. RESTELL'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Education Office, Christchurch, 29th March, 1879.

I have the honor to report the inspection and examination of 54 schools, of, in all, 6,153 scholars, for the year 1878. In this enumeration separated schools, such as side, boys', girls', infants', have been reckoned together as one school, and of two or more visits, not mainly affecting the results, only the latest is reported, although otherwise a larger number of schools inspected and scholars examined would be represented. Under the change in the staff and the rearrangement of the special districts for North Canterbury, I have inspected and examined a number of schools, either not previously or not now in my own special district. Of these, those reported on are denoted by an asterisk in the lists annexed. Several schools, which the tempestuous weather and swollen rivers on my journeys, or other circumstances, prevented me from visiting, will be taken so soon as the interruptions from the protracted harvest season and the appointment of new teachers will render inspection desirable: these are Glentui, Kowai Bush, Kimberley, and Mandeville Plains.

I have much pleasure in reporting the generally good tone and the well-sustained efficiency of the schools in North Canterbury. My high opinion of the tone and demeanour of the scholars is supported by that of Inspectors and eminent visitors from other parts of New Zealand and from Australia, who have warmly expressed the favourable impressions they have formed from visits to some of the Christchurch and suburban schools. Good order is usually maintained by keeping the scholars well employed, under efficient supervision, and without undue severity. The energy and influence of the teachers are, however, in some instances crippled by too much interference on the part of parents and members of Committees. The repression of legitimate means of punishment will tend to the substitution of under-hand expedients for maintaining a semblance of subordination.

It would needlessly swell this report to include in it those on the discipline, order, tone, and efficiency of each school examined and duly reported to the Board; and to state again the defects which have been pointed out and already corrected. I think that the general efficiency or inefficiency which be sufficiently shown in the tabular statements annexed. The method of testing the efficiency of the teaching-power and ascertaining the proficiency of the scholars by examination in standards continues to be attended with decisive results. There is nothing in this system to preclude an Inspector from observing and recording the *morale* of a school. Nor is there anything in the effecting of the standard routine which is antagonistic to the best organization and discipline, and the highest tone. And even the labour entailed upon the Inspector is not very much greater than before in districts in it has been the custom to test individual progress, or to class the scholars in order of merit. The definitive results attained in the several districts must impart a more intelligible and correct impression than any estimate of the differently-grounded opinions of several Inspectors.

Inefficiency in the moral fails also in the mental culture. A bad school may produce a few showy and startling effects, but the best results year after year will only coincide with sound *morale* and a healthy tone. The indolence, negligence, or inconsistency of the staff will be seen, as in a mirror, in