

## REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

(It has not been considered necessary, as a rule, to print those portions of the Inspectors' reports which relate to particular schools.)

### AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

I have the honor to submit the following report for the year ended 31st December, 1878 :—

The number of primary schools in the education district in the first quarter of 1878 was 172 ; in the second, 176 ; in the third, 176 ; and in the fourth quarter, 179. In these numbers every two half-time schools are counted as one school. The actual number of schools taught half-time was, in the last quarter of the year, 30. The attendance of pupils is shown in the following table :—

Quarter ending	Number of Schools.	Roll Number.			Average Attendance.		
		M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.
March 31 ... ..	172	6,675	5,552	12,227	4,866	3,765	8,631
June 30 ... ..	176	7,171	5,901	13,072	5,152	3,879	9,031
September 30 ... ..	176	6,201	5,203	11,404	4,773	3,663	8,436
December 31 ... ..	179	6,424	5,504	11,928	5,020	4,075	9,095

The modification of the system which existed in the district before the passing of "The Education Act, 1877," and my visit to the southern parts of the colony in connection with that modification, have taken up a great deal of time, and interfered considerably with the work of inspection. The object of my visit to the South was mainly, as the Board is aware, to see the working of the normal schools in Christchurch and Dunedin. Through the kindness of the Inspector-General, of the Inspectors in Canterbury and Dunedin, and of the masters of the training and practising schools, I was enabled to acquire a tolerably complete acquaintance with the manner in which these schools are carried on.

The training of teachers has been carried on here hitherto by means of classes held in the evening and on Saturdays at Auckland and the Thames ; and by the employment of probationers. A number of junior assistants are also employed. These junior assistants are virtually pupil-teachers, but are not articulated. The master of the Auckland classes receives at the rate of £150 a year, and his assistant, £50. At the Thames the master, who has no assistant, receives £50 a year. The classes are attended by junior assistants and probationers, and by some others who, though not employed as teachers, attend by special permission of the Board. The probationers are persons whom the Board think likely to make useful teachers, and who are taken on probation for periods of three months. An allowance ranging from £2 10s. to £5 a month is paid to each. There are three classes of junior assistants receiving salaries of from £20 to £60 a year. Further, for the guidance of teachers, minute instructions as to school management and methods of teaching have been drawn up and printed. These have been found a valuable guide to young and inexperienced teachers, who are but little qualified to separate the wheat of text-books of school management from the chaff. Of these classes, the Auckland class has been very successful: that held at the Thames has not, I regret to say, given satisfactory results. It is now proposed to establish a regular training school, and the Board have procured a site in Wellesley Street, adjoining the district school, on which to erect the necessary buildings. It is intended to use the Wellesley Street school as a practising school. For admission to the training school it will be required that candidates shall have reached sixteen years of age, and shall have passed an examination somewhat equivalent to that for Class E. They will be required to spend in public primary-school teaching two years out of the first three years after leaving the training school. It is now intended also to have the pupil-teachers articulated, but I cannot see much to be gained by this.

What I have learned with respect to the system of training existing elsewhere leads me to believe that the methods adopted for that end here cannot be held to be altogether unsatisfactory or ineffectual. No doubt, under a reasonable system of management the establishment of a normal school in Auckland will be productive of much good. What I mean by a reasonable system is one which shall have for its aim to train young people to be useful teachers in primary schools—such a system as will not bewilder students with too much of the upholstery of the profession, and one which will sedulously avoid cramming. It appears to me that in New Zealand, just now, too much value is attached to the mere acquirements of a teacher, and too little to the rare gift of imparting knowledge. A teacher should be first made fit to teach a class, and then to teach a school. These simple ends seem to me to be often in a measure lost sight of. They are hidden from the student in the upholstery of theories, and systems, and endless talk. It is forgotten that the function of the teacher is to assist Nature, not to encumber her with help. Nature might be trusted a little. Some educationists seem consciously or unconsciously to think, "How foolish are the birds that live in thickets and eat berries!" They would save the birds from such mistaken courses ; would shut them up in cages, and administer to them hard-boiled eggs and saffron. Teachers trained where these ideas run riot are but too likely to become expensive and injurious failures.