

The present Education Act has worked well in this district. But vigilance will be required on the part of the Board to insure that the Act is honestly carried out everywhere. Symptoms of a desire to evade the provisions respecting religious instruction have shown themselves in one or two places. There are found persons who seek, of their own mere motion, to enact an amendment to the Education Act. It has not probably occurred to them that their example must have an injurious effect on the youth of the country, whom every one should desire to see growing up honest and law-abiding. Be that as it may, it seems to me that the law of the land cannot be allowed to be set at naught by any persons, no matter how good their intentions may be.

I have, &c.,

RICHARD J. O'SULLIVAN,
Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman of the Board of Education, Auckland.

TARANAKI.

1. REPORT by the SECRETARY of EDUCATION on the TARANAKI SCHOOLS.

Hon. Mr. BALLANCE.

My stay at Taranaki extended over nine and a half days, exclusive of two Sundays. Five days were wholly occupied by me in visiting, along with the Board's Inspector, sixteen schools in different parts of the district. I was present at two meetings of the Education Board. The second meeting was held after I had seen a number of the schools, and I had therefore an opportunity of laying before the Board the result of my observations, and of making a number of suggestions of a practical character. The remainder of my time was occupied in discussing school subjects with the Board's Secretary and Inspector, and in procuring information respecting the education reserves. I also saw the Native Commissioner (Captain Brown) and others in reference to the state of education amongst the Native children. I am in hopes that my visit will prove of service to the Board, its officers and teachers, all of whom received me cordially.

STATE OF EDUCATION.—I was pleased to find that educational matters, although behind what I have seen in other parts of the colony, are not so backward and unsatisfactory as might have been expected considering the disorganized state of affairs consequent on the Native disturbances, the lack of funds, the scattered nature of the population, the "out-of-the-way" situation of the district, and other unfavourable circumstances. The Education Board is composed of gentlemen of business habits and ability, who seem to have managed educational affairs with earnestness, good sense, and economy. I do not know that, under the circumstances, and with the means at their disposal, the present Board and its predecessors could have done much more as regards education than has been effected. Besides, they have laboured under the disadvantage of not having the assistance of any one in the district fully and practically acquainted with the more recent and approved methods of school management.

INSPECTION.—The Board's Inspector is sensible, kindly in manner, zealous, and painstaking, and it was very evident to me from what I everywhere witnessed that he possesses in a large degree the respect and confidence of the Board, the teachers, the scholars, and the settlers generally. He seemed to me to hold sound views on the subject of school education, and he has had some experience long ago as a teacher in Europe, and more recently as a master of a private school in Taranaki; but he has never had an opportunity of gaining a practical acquaintance with school management and method according to the more recently approved systems. He has rendered good service to education in the Taranaki District, and I am disposed to think that in the past disorganized and impoverished condition of the settlement his services have been perhaps even more valuable than those of a smart Inspector with abundance of technical knowledge, but wanting in the colonial experience, the kindly heart and manner, and the good sense which characterize Mr. Crompton's official action. He seems to have been exercising a humanizing influence in his intercourse with the settlers and their children in the remoter bush localities. His salary is only £100 a year, yet he spends the greater part of his time in visiting and inspecting schools and in intercourse with the teachers and settlers.

TEACHERS.—None of the teachers whom I saw seem to have received any professional training worth mentioning. But, somehow or other, the Board has managed to get hold of a number of men and women who possess in a greater or less degree many of the essential and more important qualifications of a teacher, such as good personal bearing, kindness of disposition, and that force of character and knowledge of human nature which enable a teacher to control his pupils and to train them by right means to correct habits. But they are greatly wanting in that technical knowledge and skill which would enable them to organize their schools, and classify and instruct their pupils, in such a manner as to get through much more school work in a given time with less effort to themselves and more advantage to the pupils.

SCHOOL-BUILDINGS.—The school-buildings are on the whole better than I expected. A number of them were formerly "block-houses," and are tolerably substantial. But they are, as a rule, too narrow, and not well finished. They are poorly furnished, and are very defective as regards the shape and arrangement of the desks and seats. A considerable portion of the Board's grant is needed to furnish and fit up properly the existing school-buildings.

SCHOOL COMMITTEES.—Owing to several causes, such as the very small number of schools and the difficulty in many cases of getting a Committee of sufficient business capacity and intelligence to manage the local school affairs, the present Board and its predecessor had got into the way of taking the whole charge of the school business, which, in most other educational districts, is usually managed by the School Committees. No doubt the Education Act expressly provides that the School Committees should take charge of the local details and the expenditure of the School Fund, and the Order in Council enjoins that the disbursing of their own share of the 10s. grant should be intrusted to the respective School Committees; but the knowledge I have gained at Taranaki shows me that in some school districts it is as yet very difficult, if not impossible, to get Committees competent to take the work in hand—that, in fact, the parents are not themselves sufficiently educated. But though this may be the case with