

**ARITHMETIC.**—The arithmetic has improved somewhat during the year, but even now the failures are more numerous than in reading and writing combined. Napier and Gisborne are the only schools where the subject is taught with real success. The majority of failures occur in Standards II. and III., although in a few schools scarcely a pupil passed in any of the standards.

**HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, AND GRAMMAR.**—Last year I referred at length to the teaching of history, geography, and grammar. These subjects are taught in all schools where there are pupils above Standard II. In country schools at least I could wish that they were optional, for certainly the work is so unsatisfactory, and so much time is taken away from other subjects of pressing importance, that the bits of this and bits of that, all indefinite in themselves, which the children manage to scrape together, forcibly reminds one of the lines used by Lord Selborne in a recent address to students against that kind of superficiality which is produced by attempting too many things—

“He could not reap, he could not sow,  
Nor was he wise at all,  
For very many arts he knew,  
But badly knew them all.”

Until history, geography, and grammar are taught so as to encourage and stimulate children to examine for themselves the principles which underlie each of these subjects, and to deduce therefrom general laws relating to change and development, but little good will ensue, and this cannot well be attempted in small schools where at the most four pupils are presented as high as Standard IV., and the teachers are mainly occupied in the preparation of children in the lower standards.

**EXTRA SUBJECTS.**—Extra subjects, as singing, recitation, and drawing, were attempted in most schools, but in few only are the results of any real merit. Napier, Gisborne, Matawhero, Ormond, and Hastings stand pre-eminent in the teaching of singing, the children in the upper divisions of these schools being able to sing part-songs from music written upon the black-board. In the Napier School political economy and physiology were also taken as special subjects, the former by Standards V. and VI., the latter by Standard IV. The pupils in both cases acquitted themselves well, and I could wish that these subjects were taken up generally in the schools of this district, for their importance as bearing upon the after-lives of the children can hardly be over-estimated.

**PUPIL-TEACHERS.**—I cannot conclude my report without drawing the attention of the Board to the wants of the pupil-teachers. In 1878 I suggested, as an incentive to promising boys and girls to become pupil-teachers, “that a bonus be offered of £20 or £30 to each pupil-teacher who completed his or her apprenticeship with credit and passed the entrance examination of one of the training colleges in New Zealand.” Several of the pupil-teachers will have completed their full service of four years in July next, and a number of others in the following July, and I think something should be done on their behalf. I should indeed be sorry if their careers as teachers ended at the expiration of their engagements under the Board. They have, without exception, done good work, and I should very much like to see them go forward in the profession they have chosen for themselves. If the Board drew the attention of the Minister of Education to the matter, possibly training college scholarships might be established specially for pupil-teachers in districts where there are no training colleges. That such a plan would greatly benefit this district, as far as the teaching supply is concerned, there is not the least doubt, and certainly it would afford a means of assisting diligent and deserving young persons in pursuing a career which, I fear, will soon be closed to them unless something is done on their behalf in the direction here pointed out.

I have, &c.

The Chairman of the Education Board.

H. HILL, Inspector.

### MARLBOROUGH.

12th November, 1881.

SIR,—

I have the honor to submit to you my report on the Marlborough public schools for 1881. I have examined twenty-two schools, the number of scholars present at examination being 1,037. The total number on the rolls at the same date was 1,247, as against 1,122 in 1880. Six hundred and ninety-one scholars were presented for standards; 553 passed, the percentage for the district being 80, or 2 per cent. more than was obtained last year. In addition to the table showing the average age at which the children in each school have passed the several standards, I have prepared a statement showing the number of failures in each subject.\*

On the whole, there is now little to find fault with in the teaching of reading, geography, and history. The spelling is not quite so good. Having found it necessary to censure with some severity, in my last year's report, the very general neglect in the art of letter-writing, I have the more pleasure in acknowledging the marked improvement that has been effected in this important subject.

I regret that my strictures on the handwriting have not been followed by any adequate improvement in the copy-books. Here the record of passes and failures is misleading. Although the actual failures amount to only seventeen, it must be explained that many scholars have barely escaped rejection, and that scores of passes may be said to have satisfied only the minimum of requirement. As I do not believe that any natural incapacity for writing tolerably well exists in more than one in a hundred of those who have the full use of their eyes and right hands, I intend trying at my next examination the effect of greater strictness in granting passes for writing. I have a strong suspicion that most of the blots, mis-spellings, and half-formed letters that now so frequently offend the eye are quite avoidable where teachers and scholars are alike in earnest. I believe, further, that the vast majority of boys and girls of, say, twelve years old can, if they choose, write a neat, round, legible hand, the basis of a good current hand. I have only to point to the example of two or three schools in this district—such as Renwick, where slovenly copy-books are unknown—to prove that this can be done where proper pains are taken, and where the master knows his business.

Of the discipline and general tone of the Marlborough schools I can speak in very favourable terms.

\* Table and statement not reprinted.