

cost of a carpet, the amount of a simple bill of parcels; when they can write a page of foolscap on the cause of rain, and yet fail to tell why a particular country, whose physical features they know, has a heavy rainfall or the reverse; when they can locate places, and yet cannot mention through what oceans, seas, &c., a vessel would pass on a voyage to London from New Zealand; when they are unable to write half a dozen readable sentences on a subject or place familiar to them from childhood; when they have no idea how a law is made, or their country governed, the inevitable conclusion is that these boys may have been "crammed," but they assuredly have not been educated. And here it is where the opponents of the system score a victory. And, further, I would ask teachers to pay the utmost attention to the discipline of their classes. Let no little faults be overlooked. "No leak ever broke up a dyke more certainly than trifles passed over break up the order of a class." A sleepy manner on the part of the teacher, however earnest he may be, produces apathy in the lazy and tricks in the thoughtless section of his class. Indolent attitudes produce indolent minds. "Inattention is a master's sin. It is a weed which, above all, grows on badly-farmed ground." Attention, on the other hand, rises or falls in the barometer in proportion to the master's ability. And if the class does not learn it is the teacher's fault, though it may be the fault of the class also. But the teacher has to train the class, and overcome the various difficulties that present themselves—not allow himself to be baffled by them. The trainer's colt may be restive and vicious; but, nevertheless, it is the bad horseman who is unseated.

Before closing this report I must refer to the strange laxity shown by many parents in causing their children to take advantage of the educational privileges offered to them. The most specious excuses are given for irregular attendance—"Johnny has 'to mind the cows,' or 'nurse the baby,'" "the roads are bad," &c. I say "specious excuses," because I almost invariably find that, when inquiry is made, they fall to the ground. The attendance, too, at some schools is excellent, at others very bad, though the surrounding circumstances are the same. Again, I have known a child kept at home for months because the teacher punished him. If parents were obliged to pinch to pay directly for the education of their children, they would probably see that such children attended more regularly than they do at present. On comparing the average weekly roll with the working average, I find that the loss to the Board's revenue from irregular attendance has been about £6,000. Imagine what could be done in the country districts with even the one-third of such a sum!

I have, &c.,

W. H. VEREKER-BINDON, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

### WELLINGTON.

Sir,—

Wellington, 24th February, 1886.

In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, I beg to present my twelfth annual report on the work and general condition of the primary State schools in this district.

Owing, apparently, to the opening-up of new settlement, and to the commercially attractive condition of the district as compared with some other parts of the colony, the year 1885 shows a marked increase in the number of schools in operation and in the number of children attending them; the number of schools having increased from fifty-five to sixty-three, and the number of children on the roll from 7,299 to 8,235. Although the work now thrown upon me is greater than that of last year by eight schools and 938 children, I have been able to examine all the schools in operation, and also to inspect all of them, except two aided and three small country schools. But the increased work necessitated some change in the time for examination in several country schools, and I have now arranged to examine most of the schools taught by one teacher in the early part of the year.

The attendance at the examinations still continues satisfactory, very few standard candidates being absent. The actual attendance was 7,522, or 91 per cent. of the number enrolled; and, notwithstanding the large increase for the year of nearly one thousand pupils, the absentees this year, including infants, numbered only 713, as compared with 659 last year.

To this report is appended a table of results showing the passes made in each school at the annual examination. A return similar to this, but differing from it in detail, will in future be furnished by all District Inspectors at the request of the Education Department. With the view of affording fairer comparison between school and school as to the working results, I have grouped the schools according to size, and separated the purely infant-schools from the rest.

Before going into the question of results at the examinations I should state that no appreciable difference was made in the severity of the tests, and therefore a standard pass this year means no more and no less than it did last year. Nor do I think the requirements in grammar and arithmetic can be made more difficult of attainment without disaster, or more useful in aim without unreasonable increase in the work. On the other hand, I see no reason for making the tests less exacting in the pass-subjects as now prescribed.

The following table will show at a glance a comparison between the passes made this year and last in the several standards:—

| Standard.            | Number of Passes. |       | Percentage of Passes. |       | Expected Passes. |       | Average Age.       |                    |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                      | 1884.             | 1885. | 1884.                 | 1885. | 1884.            | 1885. | 1884.<br>Yrs. mos. | 1885.<br>Yrs. mos. |
| Standard I. ... ..   | 973               | 882   | 97                    | 95    | 997              | 929   | 8 10               | 8 8                |
| Standard II. ... ..  | 835               | 920   | 89                    | 86    | 936              | 1,070 | 9 11               | 9 10               |
| Standard III. ... .. | 618               | 644   | 74                    | 71    | 731              | 913   | 11 2               | 11 2               |
| Standard IV. ... ..  | 537               | 430   | 91                    | 75    | 589              | 575   | 12 5               | 12 3               |
| Standard V. ... ..   | 345               | 344   | 85                    | 76    | 405              | 450   | 13 2               | 13 2               |
| Standard VI. ... ..  | 132               | 166   | 80                    | 73    | 167              | 228   | 14 5               | 14 0               |
| Total ... ..         | 3,440             | 3,386 | 88                    | 81    | 3,825            | 4,165 | ...                | ...                |