

rich in fairly large town schools, while Nelson District, with very many small schools and few large ones, has a higher percentage than Wanganui by 4.5. "Bad weather" I have sometimes thought was partly responsible, but I find that Grey and Westland, with presumably the worst weather in the colony, beat us by 3.4 and 5.1 respectively. Owing to the great importance of this subject—which must be my excuse for dwelling so long upon it—I have taken a great deal of trouble to find where the fault lies; and that the attendance at the large schools is far from being as regular as it ought to be is very evident from the following figures, which show the average attendances of the nine largest schools (the schools in Wanganui Borough are taken as one), expressed as percentages of the mean of their weekly roll-numbers for the four quarters of the year: Wanganui (4 schools), 79.6; Hawera, 79.4; Aramoho, 75.6; Marton, 75; Palmerston—Central School, 72.9; Patea, 71.5; Palmerston—Terrace End, 69.7; Foxton, 69.6; Feilding, 65.8. Now, is it not very discreditable that at not one of these individual schools does the percentage of attendance reach that for the colony, or those for the Districts of Otago, Auckland, North Canterbury, and Hawke's Bay; that at Patea, Terrace End, Foxton, and Feilding the percentages are far below that of any district; and that Feilding shows 6.6 below Taranaki, the lowest district, and 19.9 (!) below Otago, the highest? But all these comparisons should show results in our favour, for the percentages of single town schools with every advantage are compared with that of the colony, and with those of whole districts in which necessarily every kind of school is represented, including little aided and bush schools. Some such questions, too, as the following present themselves: When the percentages for the large schools individually do not reach the average percentage for the colony or the percentages for several districts, how much lower must be the percentages at these schools than those at similarly-situated large schools in other districts, and how can our small country schools be expected to make up the difference? When the percentage for the whole District of Otago is 85.7, what must be the percentages of the Dunedin City schools compared with those of the schools of the large towns of Wanganui and Palmerston? How can the pupils in this district, with such comparatively low attendances, be as well educated as those in some other districts? Finally, then, I appeal to all interested—Board, Committees, teachers, parents, and even children—to endeavour to wipe out this disgrace of several years' standing. That this district—one of the most advanced in the colony, with its railway and metalled roads from end to end; with its magnificent plains and well-grassed hills; with its old-established farms in as perfect a state as could be desired, and its new well-cleared bush farms; with its comfortable country homes, and its fine towns ten to fifteen miles apart; with its schools so close that comparatively few children have to walk more than two or three miles each way, while many ride fine horses—should year after year show that it values education less than other districts, some of which cannot for a moment be compared with it in point of advantages, surely is not creditable. To encourage all in their endeavours, I may point out that the two schools highest on the list of percentages showed me in their upper standards far and away the best work in the district.

GROWTH OF THE DISTRICT.—The following table showing how the district has progressed during the past ten years will be of interest:—

	1880.		1890.		Increase.
Number of schools in operation (last quarter)	55	...	87	...	32
Number of pupils on rolls...	4,394	...	7,889	...	3,495
Average attendance	3,319	...	5,761	...	2,442
Average attendance for year as percentage of mean of roll-numbers for four quarters	75.1	...	73.8	...	Decrease. 1.3
Teachers	55	...	86	...	Increase. 72
Assistants	18	102	29	174	
Pupil-teachers	29	...	59	...	
Presented in standards	2,217	...	4,726	...	2,509
Passed in standards	1,704	...	3,401	...	1,697
Passed in Standard I.	562	...	846	...	284
Passed in Standard IV.	134	...	488	...	354
Passed in Standard VI.	28	...	125	...	97

In all the numbers in the foregoing table there is thus great improvement, except in that one which represents the average attendance expressed as a percentage of the mean of the roll-numbers for the four quarters of the year, where there is a decrease of 1.3. Such decrease is a very displeasing feature, for it makes one incline to the opinion that the colonists are not now so keenly alive to the advantages of a sound primary education for their children as they were ten years ago; yet the education now given is infinitely superior to that of 1880, and the teaching has improved yearly. My own personal experience as a teacher, and as an Inspector since the Education Act was passed in 1877, confirms the foregoing opinion. It is, I suppose, the old story: what is new and fashionable is often valued more than what is old and well known, though the former may be wholly untried, while the latter not only has been tried but also has been found worthy. At the same time, however, it must be remembered in connection with these percentages that ten years ago all the schools were on the main roads, whereas now there are many in the so-called back-country. During the past five or six years a great deal of land on this coast, which formerly was covered with dense bush, has been taken up in comparatively small sections, and the Board has done a great deal to encourage settlement by establishing schools as soon as a fair attendance of pupils could be counted upon. No doubt the struggling pioneers on these sections have more work which their children can do—hence they keep them frequently from school—than the majority of settlers of ten years ago had, who occupied well-grassed farms from which scrub and fern had been cleared, and upon which "logging-up" and such-like were not daily required as on a bush farm.

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INSPECTION.—The time at my disposal allowed of my paying only fifty-two visits of inspection. It is very evident that year by year the number of these important visits must decrease, as long as