

1894.  
NEW ZEALAND.

## EDUCATION: REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.-1B, 1893.]

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.*

### AUCKLAND.

SIR,— Education Board Office, Auckland, 22nd February, 1894.

We have the honour to present our report for 1893.

At the end of the year 308 schools were in operation. Of these, 305 were examined during the year. The three not examined were first opened in November. Two hundred and ninety-six schools have been inspected. Of the twelve which were not inspected, nine are half-time schools, each of which is taught in conjunction with a school which was inspected; two were not open when the Inspector was in the neighbourhood; pressure of other work prevented the inspection of the remaining one.

The year has been a trying one for both teachers and children. Regularity of attendance has been much interfered with by the exceptionally wet weather, and the consequently bad state of the country roads, and to a much greater extent by the epidemic of measles, which spared scarcely any part of the district. The interruption thus caused to the regular progress of school work has, of course, adversely affected the examination results. Still we can say, and it is very gratifying to be able to do so, that many teachers have successfully grappled with the difficulties that beset them, and have produced very satisfactory results.

The percentage of passes for the year is 47·7; the percentage of failures is 17·7. The falling off which is apparent on comparing these figures with the percentages for 1892—namely, 51·1 and 14·5 respectively—may be attributed entirely to the unavoidable adverse conditions already mentioned. Fifty-six schools, or about 18 per cent., have been reported as having failed to produce satisfactory results at examination. The average ages at the time of passing the several standards compare favourably with those of 1892.

The mean of average ages has been reduced one month, and now stands at eleven years nine months. The number of children more than eight years old who were presented in Class P. was 1,752. This is a slightly smaller percentage of the total number of children than the number so presented in 1892. With very few exceptions we have been quite satisfied with the reasons assigned by the teachers. The backward condition of the children has, in the great majority of cases, been ascribed to irregularity of attendance, or the short time spent at school.

The following table shows the summary of examination results for the year:—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ... ..	228	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ... ..	1,090	40	61	241	748	14 4
" V. ... ..	1,909	135	120	483	1,171	13 5
" IV. ... ..	2,837	229	216	637	1,755	12 3
" III. ... ..	3,255	217	235	470	2,333	11 4
" II. ... ..	3,635	205	225	409	2,796	10 3
" I. ... ..	3,538	225	194	272	2,847	9 0
Preparatory ... ..	7,930	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ... ..	24,422	1,051	1,051	2,512	11,650	11 9*

\* Mean of average age.

The defects revealed by examination have been principally in spelling, writing, drawing, and composition.

Bad spelling has been very noticeable, not only in set tests, but in the composition exercises and other written work. The errors are not confined to difficult words; easy and common words are frequently mis-spelled, and geographical names, such as "Pyrenees" or "Waikato," suffer severely. We attribute this principally to the carelessness shown by many teachers in examining the written work of the children, and also to the practice of confining transcriptions to columns of words.

Writing, though legible, is often crude and ill-formed. The work in exercise-books is often much inferior to that in the copy-books, and even in the copy-books many children have been allowed to write in a style quite different from that of the head-line. Some latitude in the selection of copy-books has been given to the teachers this year; it is, however, necessary to remind teachers that a close imitation of the copy is an essential in producing good writing, and that much of the time spent over the copy-books will be thrown away if careless work in the exercise-books is allowed.

Good work has been done in geometrical drawing and also in scale drawing, but freehand drawing has somewhat fallen off, and the model drawing in a great many of the schools is not worthy of the name. The neglect of this last named branch of the subject is, we believe, due to the fact that but few teachers have a competent knowledge of the principles underlying it.

Composition is sadly wanting in vitality. Really good teaching in this subject is rare. The teachers in many schools are satisfied with setting the children some subject to write about and then criticizing their efforts. Good composition cannot be expected to result from such a plan. What is wanted is systematic direct teaching from the beginning.

It is a rare thing in this district for a child to fail in reading. Still, very good reading is not common. In accordance with instructions last year, the Inspectors tested the classes below Standard V. in two reading-books. As these classes were supplied with two books in only a very few schools, the additional test applied was in nearly every case an unseen passage. The results generally varied from fair in Standard I. to satisfactory in Standard IV. Mere examination in an unseen book will not, however, of itself improve the reading. Practice in a wider range of reading matter is what is required. We think that every class, from Standard I. to Standard VI., should read in at least two books during the year. A love of reading should be encouraged by every means available, and the occasional use in the school of an interesting book from the school library might help in this direction.

We are glad to be able to again report favourably on the general order, discipline, and tone of the schools, and on the manners and behaviour of the children. The cleanliness of the rooms has been usually well attended to. Many teachers have made successful efforts to render their school-rooms bright and cheerful, though in too many places the walls are disfigured with time-stained remnants of notices, circulars, and the like. The practice of fastening such papers to the walls by means of paste or gum is very undesirable. The papers thus fastened are not easily detached, and they or their fragments are frequently left to disfigure the walls and absorb dust and damp long after their usefulness has passed away. Another objectionable practice in favour with some teachers is to cover the walls with chalk inscriptions of arithmetical tables—formulae, and similar matter. This practice serves no useful purpose, and does not improve the appearance of the room. Improvement has been made in keeping the registers; though it is surprising to note that neglect is still sometimes found in a matter about which no one can plead ignorance or want of skill.

In addition to our ordinary work, we visited for the Education Department thirty-six Native schools. That we were able to do this as well as to attend to our ever-increasing number of Board schools is due to the help rendered by Mr. James Grierson, whom the Board appointed temporary Assistant Inspector in the middle of the year. It gives us very great pleasure to bear testimony to the valuable assistance rendered by Mr. Grierson.

We have, &c.,

JOHN S. GOODWIN,	} Inspectors.
WALTER HENRY AIREY, B.A.,	
JAS. C. DICKINSON,	
RICHARD CROWE,	

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland.

#### TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 5th March, 1894.

I have the honour to submit my report on the schools of the district for the year ending the 30th December, 1893.

During the year forty-nine schools were in operation. Visits of inspection were made to all the schools with the exception of the aided school at Pungarehu and the Eltham Road School, both of which were closed when I was inspecting in their neighbourhood. The severe weather was a great hindrance to me in carrying out the work of inspection. Several visits to bush schools were necessarily short, as the greater portion of the day was spent in travelling over roads that were not unfrequently dangerous. Forty-two schools were examined. Pungarehu also was examined, but the results were of such an unsatisfactory character that the Board took immediate action to have the school placed under efficient instruction. In accordance with the expressed wish of the Committee, and the changes in the teaching staff of the schools having made such a step advisable, the examinations of the schools at Waiongona, Waipuku, and Tariki Road were postponed, and will be held during the month of April or May of the present year. About the same time it is my intention to examine the recently-opened schools at Toko, Dudley Road, and Pembroke Road.

The extension of settlement throughout the district is adding to the number of memorials before the Board for providing increased school accommodation. In response to these petitions three new schools were opened during the year and two others are now under contract for erection. Notwithstanding this increase in the number of the schools, and the enlargement of the Urenui, Ngaire, and Cardiff Road schools, at least four buildings in newly-settled districts are urgently required. The number of children on the school-rolls, also, has been greatly augmented, rising from 3,148 in December, 1892, to 3,358 in December, 1893. This increase of 210 is much higher than any that has obtained in previous years, and shows that the school accommodation in the country districts, where the increase in attendance has chiefly taken place, will have to be largely added to within the next few years.

The following table is the summary of results for the whole district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	3	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	92	4	2	31	55	14 6
" V. ...	167	8	11	71	77	13 7
" IV. ...	372	21	27	121	203	12 8
" III. ...	444	32	42	132	238	11 9
" II. ...	401	25	19	34	323	10 10
" I. ...	468	30	20	22	396	9 4
Preparatory ...	1,076	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	3,023	120	121	411	1,292	12 1*

\* Mean of average age.

The percentage of passes in standards is 42·7; the percentage of failures is 24·1. The first percentage is a slight improvement on that of last year, which was 41·5; the percentage of failures is, however, higher by 2·8 per cent. This falling off in the progress of the work is beyond doubt the outcome of the frequent interruptions that were caused throughout the year, not only by the continuous and heavy rains making the roads in parts of the district impassable, but also by the severe outbreak of measles which unfortunately continued during the last quarter of the school year, when the greater number of the examinations were held. The school attendance, moreover, was for some time of so irregular a character that it was found necessary to close the majority of the schools for several weeks. In general, the largest schools in the country districts were the most unfortunate in this respect; their attendance was greatly reduced, and consequently their returns were of a more or less unsatisfactory character.

In the "class" and "additional" subjects the percentages are lower. They are 59·8 per cent. and 47 per cent. respectively. The percentages of passes in the various subjects are shown in Table IV. of the Board's annual report. Reading and drawing in all the standards, and the grammar of Standard IV., are the only subjects which have steadily progressed. Geography, composition, arithmetic, and spelling were by no means so well prepared.

Distributed over twenty-nine schools, the number of children over eight years of age in the preparatory classes was 290, of which about 65 per cent. were attending bush schools. One hundred and ten of these scholars had been irregular in attendance, ninety-one were in attendance for a less period than fifteen months, thirty-two were returned as dull, nine had been in ill-health, and forty-eight were not sufficiently advanced in preparation. The total number is an improvement on last year's return, and I have good reasons for expressing the opinion that there is a wide-spread desire on the part of the teachers to promote those pupils over eight years of age that are at all likely to succeed in Standard I. On the other hand, not a few pupils in this district are late in beginning school life, and do not pass Standard I. until they have reached an age at which pupils in other districts have passed Standards IV. and V.

While expressing my satisfaction with the work of the preparatory classes, I find it necessary to call the attention of several teachers to the need for frequently exercising the young scholars in these classes in mental addition. With practice in adding the digits arranged on the blackboard in a circle or in groups, these scholars can be trained to add rapidly and to work questions on their slates without the aid of finger or stroke counting. In reading, also, the first step in every lesson should be word naming or reading backwards; this method is the one in daily practice in the best-taught schools in the district. At this early stage, when the words of a lesson are familiarly known, word grouping should be begun, and special care taken to have the grouping natural and agreeable to the ear. Underlining the words grouped in the primer books or arranging the words in groups on the blackboard will be found useful aids to the teacher.

In Standard I. some weakness was frequently evident in the preparation of the aliquot parts of the pound sterling. Notation and numeration were very well answered, and the slate tests in addition and multiplication were rarely inaccurate. Reading, spelling, and writing were as well prepared as in former years. The hints given last year in the use of the set squares had been well received and acted upon, for I found a complete reform in the mode of manipulating them.

Although the Order in Council of the 27th April, 1893, requires that Inspectors shall not insist on a knowledge of the technical words of geometry, I found that the teachers preferred to treat such work in the junior standards as it had been prepared in the preceding year. Their reasons for doing so were that the lessons presented little difficulty and were very popular among the pupils; that the training was progressive; and to pupil and teacher the antecedent preparation lessened to a great extent the amount of work required in geometry in Standard IV.

The results in arithmetic in Standards II. and V. were frequently unsatisfactory. Many bad failures in the subject occurred in both standards. Even the mechanical work could not be classed as accurate. It appears as if the irregularity of attendance had retarded the progress in arithmetic of these standards to a degree far greater than it had the other standards. Arithmetic, however, has improved in the majority of the schools. Methods are, on the whole, good; the mechanical work is fairly accurate, and the papers worked at examinations are, as a rule, creditable in neatness. This is especially so in Standards VI. and IV. Occasionally an evident weakness is met with in the treatment of this subject in Standard III., which is greatly due to the want of exactness on the part of a few teachers. Mental arithmetic still receives in every school the attention it deserves.

Spelling and dictation continue to be well taught; but neither the transcription on slate of Standard II. nor the writing of Standard I. was equal to past effort.

Paraphrasing was the weakest part of the instruction in composition. In the best schools this useful exercise had been taught with success, but the teaching of it generally, judged by its results, must have been carelessly performed. The exercises of Standards III. and IV. show that the teaching of composition is receiving more methodical treatment at the hands of teachers. I noticed that the lessons on the knowledge of form were helpful to the scholars when describing the objects they were asked to write about.

Reading is one of the best-taught subjects. But the explanation of the language is too often confined to the meanings of words, while the phrases and sentences are left unexplained. There is great need for improvement in this part of the teaching, as the results were frequently indifferent or bad.

Drawing is another subject that is progressing very satisfactorily. Two portions of the work, however, require comment. Scale drawing was inferior and by no means as well done as I expected it would be. A want of decision, also, in the freehand tests was frequently noticed. The rubber is too liberally used, though many teachers wisely prohibit its use altogether. I suggest as a remedy the French treatment—a free use of the pen and ink. The old drawing-books could be utilised for such work. A supply of suitable drawing models and other apparatus is much needed; those in use are of a very primitive character.

Geography as a class-subject was fairly well known, but the answering in the pass-work was not so good, the words of the text-book had in many instances been committed to memory, showing that the teaching was mechanical. Questions requiring the exercise of intelligence were frequently avoided or imperfectly answered.

More attention has been given to the grammar of Standard IV.; the papers were a marked improvement on those which I examined last year. Very unsatisfactory work was done in the other standard classes. Serious blunders were often met with in the parsing and analysis exercises. The subject receives but little attention now, and in a number of schools the time given to this subject in the higher standards at examination could be more profitably given to other work. Satisfactory work, however, was done in Standard III.

On the tone and order of the schools I have to report most favourably. It is a pleasure to inspect in many of them. In a few the discipline is weak, but yet in these the teacher who has not the personal qualities of the disciplinarian may do much by proper method.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.

WILLIAM MURRAY, Inspector.

---

#### WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Education Office, Wanganui, 25th February, 1894.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending the 31st December, 1893.

During the latter half of the year measles were very prevalent throughout the district. Many schools were closed for varying periods, while many were kept open with three-fourths of their pupils absent. Epidemics are seriously interfering with the work of education in this district. For the past three years we have had influenza and whooping-cough, influenza and diphtheria, and measles. For the quarter ending 30th September the average was 393 lower than in the June quarter, owing to the prevalence of measles, while in the ordinary course of events the average would have considerably increased, owing to the examination in standards going on throughout the September quarter. The weather, too, no doubt seriously affected the attendance, for rain fell on an unusually large number of days throughout the year.

*Inspection.*—All the schools, with the exception of five which were opened during the latter part of the year, were duly inspected, ten more visits being paid than during 1892.

*Examination of Schools.*—Of the 103 schools open at the end of the year, eighty-nine were examined in standards. Of the fourteen not examined five had been newly opened, and nine were closed at examination time on account of the prevalence of the measles, and time did not permit of special visits for examination being paid.

On the days appointed for the examination there were 7,831 pupils (4,082 boys and 3,749 girls) on the rolls of the eighty-nine schools examined, of whom 5,137, or 65·6 per cent., were presented in Standard I. to Standard VI.; 2,662 were in the preparatory classes; and thirty-two had already passed Standard VI. Of the 5,137 pupils presented in standards, 4,610 attended and were examined, 527 were absent, 379 were excepted, 988 failed, and 3,243 passed the requirements, and were promoted. The number of pupils absent from the examination is proportionately much higher than has been the case in any former year; but this is accounted for by the measles epidemic, which was very prevalent throughout the five examination months. Also, the number of "exceptions" is higher than in any previous year, and this is due partly to the cause mentioned in the foregoing sentence, and partly to the fact that one of the largest schools examined had not been

open for the prescribed three quarters. It is pleasing to notice that the percentage of roll-number presented in standards has again increased this year. The percentage of failures is slightly higher than in 1892, but this was to be expected considering the poor attendance due to the prevalence of sickness.

The following table summarises the results of each standard and for all standards in the district. Another table which gives information with regard to individual schools has not been printed, but it may be seen at the Board's office.

Number of Schools examined in each Standard.	Standards.	Presented.	Absent.	Ex-cepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Failures.	Average Age of those that passed.
19	Above Standard VI. ...	32	...	...	...	...	...	Yrs. mos.
58	Standard VI. ..	255	15	12	56	172	24.5	14 6
66	" V. ...	463	39	37	119	268	30.7	13 7
83	" IV. ...	835	100	77	244	414	37.1	12 10
85	" III. ...	1,174	149	92	249	684	26.6	11 8
84	" II. ...	1,122	100	79	140	803	14.8	10 7
88	" I. ...	1,288	124	82	180	902	16.6	9 3
87	Preparatory ...	2,662	...	...	...	...	...	...
*	...	7,831	527	379	988	3,243	23.3	12 1†

\* Number of schools examined in one standard or more, 89.

† Mean.

The average ages in the last column of the foregoing table are materially raised by lately opened schools in back districts, and really are misleading as far as the majority of schools are concerned.

*Instruction.*—The school work of the year was seriously interfered with by the prevalence of measles for several months, and diphtheria in some parts of the district. Many schools were closed for several weeks, and in many others which were kept open the majority of the pupils in the various classes were absent for a considerable time. At Campbell Street School, Palmerston, several pupils attended on the examination day for the first time for five or six weeks, as they had been kept at home either through illness or through fear of infection. In a somewhat less degree the same thing was found in other schools. It is pleasing to note, in passing, that the school did particularly well under such disadvantageous circumstances. Had the epidemic happened in the early part of the year the effect on the school work would have been bad enough, but, taking place as it did during the latter half of the year, and generally about the usual examination time, the effect was much worse. To both teachers and Inspectors considerable inconvenience was caused by the frequent changing of examination dates, rendered necessary on account of the sudden closing of certain schools upon the appearance of the epidemic. Also, in our attempt to examine as many schools as possible we were put to a considerable amount of extra travelling and extra expense. We were unable, however, to overtake nine schools. Three of these, indeed, were visited for examination, but one was found closed, at another only two pupils were present, and at another so many pupils were absent that it was thought useless to hold the examination.

In Standards I. and II. the number of failures is proportionately higher than it has been for the past three years. This, no doubt, is partly due to the prevailing illness during the examination months, and partly due to the regulation now in force for two years requiring presentation in Standard I. of pupils eight years old unless reasonable excuse for keeping them back can be shown. In Standards III. and V. the failures are fewer by 3.3 per cent. and 4.1 per cent. respectively; while they are higher in Standard VI. by 2.5 per cent. and in Standard IV. by 2.2 per cent. By far the highest percentage of failures is in Standard IV. This is to be expected, for, as it appears to us, the syllabus for this standard is comparatively more difficult than that for any other standard. Also, as soon as a pupil leaves Standard III. he finds that a large portion of the work now necessary for a "pass" is much less mechanical, and demands a greater amount of ability, thoughtful discrimination, and sustained effort. The fact of grammar being a pass-subject in Standard IV. as well as composition brings many a pupil to grief.

As regards the work done in the various subjects, there is not much new to record.

*Reading* will never be as good as it ought to be while only one reading-book is read in each class during the year. The book in use in Standard V. and the book in use in Standard VI. are far from satisfactory either in style of matter or in amount of matter. They could not reasonably be expected to be satisfactory, for each of these books forms only one of a set of three used in each standard in England during the twelve months. In small schools the difficulty a sole teacher has to contend with is that, with so many classes, he is unable to find sufficient time for the actual teaching of reading. If more were done in the direction of establishing school libraries, reading would, no doubt, materially improve. Also, we should gladly welcome the periodical issue by the department of a school newspaper to the various schools in the colony.

*Spelling* improves slowly. Carelessness in writing the dictated passages is frequently responsible for errors. Pupils that sent in good dictation papers often made very bad errors in spelling on other English papers. We are of opinion that too much of the mechanical work of correction is done by the teachers. The pupils should be trained during the school year to read aloud their own dictation, composition, &c., and to point out errors in spelling and errors in grammar in each other's work, and to suggest improvements in the style and arrangement. They should

also be led to use dictionaries. The tendency nowadays appears to be to make the paths of learning far too smooth and pleasant for the pupil, and the consequence is that when he gets out into the world he feels for a time quite at sea because his big brother, the teacher, is not by to tide him over any little difficulty that may arise. In the preparatory classes at many schools the phonic system of spelling is well taught.

In *Composition* the letter-writing was sometimes good, and properly-ended letters are now much more common than they used to be. Too often, however, the writers dealt at far too great a length with one trivial incident connected with the subject given, and ignored the chief points. Pupils should be trained first to pick out the principal interesting facts in a subject, and then to write a brief outline concerning them. As has been already mentioned under the heading "Spelling," mutual correction should be encouraged. Paraphrasing generally was very moderate.

*Grammar* has now been a class-subject for two years in Standards III., V., and VI. In our last annual report we pointed out that "the subject showed a woful falling off in Standards V. and VI." We regret to have to say that this year there was no improvement in the two highest Standards. In Standard III., however, the work was much better than in 1892, and the number of schools is gradually increasing in which intelligent methods of teaching grammar in this class and in Standard IV. prevail. Both at inspection visits and at examination visits we frequently pointed out to teachers that they should insist upon their pupils stating the functions of words before attempting to classify such words into parts of speech, and that a similar course should be pursued in the higher standards with regard to phrases and clauses. The results of the teachers' efforts have been gratifying in Standards III. and IV., but we would here point out that the function of a word should be stated *fully* with regard to its context in the sentence, and not merely a definition given, as "stating word."

Oral examination was frequently adopted in Standard III., and with good results. In a few smaller schools Standards V. and VI. also were examined orally, but the results were quite as unsatisfactory as the paper work at many other schools.

In Standard IV.—the only class in which grammar is a pass-subject—the work was comparatively far superior to that in Standards V. and VI. The syllabus for this class might well be amended in the direction of requiring from the pupils some knowledge of the parts of a sentence, even if some inflexions have to be sacrificed.

With regard to *Arithmetic*, it is difficult to write anything that would be applicable to the district as a whole, so much does the work vary at different schools. In a fair proportion of the schools the subject is well taught, but at some the results are very poor indeed. One thing we are pleased to be able to state: that at a large number of schools the work is put down in very nice style, with the various steps clearly set out, on slates or paper according to class. Training of this kind must have a very good effect. Mental arithmetic is generally most unsatisfactory.

*Writing* on the whole is a strong subject. The slate writing in Standards I. and II. was often particularly fine, as also the transcription on paper in Standard III. In very few schools had fault to be found with the transcription in the higher standards.

*Drawing* was on the whole very satisfactory. The system of requiring pupils to draw their copies in the presence of the Inspectors on examination days has done much to improve the quality of the work, and has amply repaid the extra time and trouble involved. Freehand drawing was very good, some remarkably creditable work being shown by even pupils in the lower standards. Scale drawing also was highly satisfactory, pupils, even girls, showing great interest in it, and obtaining an intelligent grasp of the principles such as ought to prove of considerable service to many of them after they leave school. In plane geometry only the easier problems were required to be worked as tests at the examination, and, taking into account the fact that such tests were given for the first time, the work was very fair. The application of scale drawing to geometrical problems from the outset is, however, somewhat confusing to the pupil just entering upon a course of geometry. The study of solid geometry in Standard VI. has not proved satisfactory, and with few exceptions the tests resulted in such lamentable failures that we decided to abandon them, and to remain satisfied with an examination of the books, and with getting the pupils to work the problems with the aid of the instructions and drawings in the books. Model drawing also was generally poor. Neither solid geometry nor model drawing can be satisfactory until the schools are supplied with the models and the planes of projection referred to in the syllabus.

With regard to the knowledge about form and relations of lines and simple geometrical figures required in Standards I., II., and III., where the forms, &c., were taught with the aid of drawings and concrete examples the children showed not only an intelligent grasp of the subject but also an eager interest in it. At many schools the figures to be studied have been drawn on large sheets of calico or paper, which are placed on the walls or map-stands before the classes. Several teachers, however, might remember that it is useless having formal definitions committed to memory before the figures they describe have been illustrated in such a manner as to bring out their various properties. Concrete examples should be shown, and the children should be required to draw their own examples, to cut them out in cardboard or tin, to put them together with sticks, &c.

It is to be regretted that a few teachers are in the habit of making very wild statements about the geometrical drawing requirements in Standards I., II., III., and IV.—*e.g.*, "Young children are supposed to know the six books of Euclid." As a consequence, some of the public have run away with extraordinary and quite erroneous ideas, and, worse still, the pupils themselves are imbued with the utterly false notion that they are attempting and even mastering work which would really be beyond their powers were it not for the exceptional cleverness of all concerned. As to the requirements in the lower three standards, they are valuable not only as a preparation for the more advanced work in the higher classes, but because it is important that even very young children should have clear ideas about *form*. That children taught in a sensible manner found no difficulty with the work we have already pointed out. Some of the names required appear no doubt to the uninitiated very formidable, but it is well known to those engaged in educational work that children

find little difficulty with names, for, as has been pointed out, they readily take to such words as "rhinoceros," "hippopotamus," and difficult surnames of their fellow-pupils. With regard to the geometry in Standard IV., we think that the number of problems might be materially reduced.

*Geography* has shown a slight improvement during the year in Standards V. and VI. The British possessions are, as a rule, now well known; but physical geography is still far from satisfactory, intelligent and full answering being rare. In Standard IV. the requirements, though lessened somewhat during the year, are still too exacting. In Standard III. the answering often was very good.

*Preparatory Classes.*—In the schools examined there were 2,662 pupils in the preparatory classes, and of these 567 were over eight years of age. Last year 22.1 per cent. of the preparatory pupils were over eight years old, and this year there is a decrease to 21.3 per cent. There is thus a distinct advance in the right direction, a result of the clause requiring that pupils shall be presented in Standard I. at the age of eight years unless satisfactory reason for non-presentation can be shown. Another result of the clause is a fall in the average age of pupils in Standard I.; this year it is nine and a quarter years, which is lower than it has been for four years. In very few schools had fault to be found with the reasons for non-presentation. Of the 567 pupils over eight years of age, 236 had not made half the attendances during the three quarters preceding that quarter in which the examination was held, and forty-six were Maoris.

*Additional Subjects.*—The average marks for each school in the additional subjects and in the class-subjects are higher than in any former year. Those for the additional subjects are under the present arrangement, however, no criterion whatever of the quality of the work done, for, although all the subjects cannot possibly be taken at many schools, the average number of marks per school is ascertained by dividing the total number of marks obtained by the district by the number of schools examined. The subjects are repetition and recitation, drill and exercises, singing, needle-work, and subject-matter of reading lessons. Of the eighty-nine schools examined last year, needle-work was not taught in fifty-one, which number was composed of schools without a female assistant and schools with a male sole teacher. Again, singing is taught above Standard I. in very few schools. Now, as the highest marks for each subject are twenty, while the possible marks obtainable by one school might be 100, those obtainable by another school might be sixty only.

As recommended at the Inspectors' Conference, the use of symbols, such as "excellent," "very good," "good," &c., would be preferable to the present system of assigning marks for these additional subjects, for, in estimating the result of oral questioning of a class, it is hardly possible to adopt the arithmetical mode of measurement with perfect exactness, while the symbols are suitable for describing general impressions.

*Buildings and Playgrounds.*—Many of the buildings are fast going to ruin for want of a coat of paint. Playgrounds are gradually being improved, and the Arbor-day movement has resulted in many young trees being planted.

*Discipline, &c.*—We are pleased to be able to speak in high terms of the order, discipline, and behaviour in the majority of the schools. The manners of the pupils also are, as a rule, most pleasing.

In conclusion, we trust that during the coming school year the efforts of the teachers will not be hampered, and the funds of the Board decreased, by any further epidemics.

We have, &c.,

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

W. E. SPENCER, M.A., B.Sc., Assistant-Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

---

## WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, 28th February, 1894.

We have the honour to present our report on the condition of the State schools of the Wellington District for the year 1893.

Five new schools have been opened during the year, making the total number in operation ninety. The increased accommodation required at Newtown has been well provided for, and the immediate pressing needs of the district for further accommodation are for the time fairly met, although a large expenditure is needed for repairs. The total number of children on the books for the past year was 12,337, an increase of 656 on the returns for 1892. We still maintain a high average roll-number for each school—137.

In making this report to the Board on the working condition of the schools we find that much consideration is due this year to the teachers, on account of unavoidable drawbacks, the most serious of which has been an epidemic of measles of exceptional severity and of unusual duration. In many cases the attendance for many consecutive weeks was reduced to nearly one-half the normal returns; and during this period many teachers were also on sick leave. The standard and class work have necessarily fallen off, and probably to an extent greater than is contemplated and greater than the decrease in the number of standard passes will indicate, so that the best efforts of the schools for another year will be needed to reinstate them in their former condition. These remarks apply with much diminished force to the work of the higher standards, in which the attendance was less affected and the conditions less altered. Indeed, we found a considerable improvement in the scholarship work for the year, and in many good schools considerable effort had already been effectually made to recover lost ground.

Although, under the circumstances, we deplore any unfavourable comparison of the results in standard examinations, and bearing in mind that at all times we look upon such numerical results as being only an approximate index of efficiency, we still think it will be useful to again put before

you a comparative statement of the actual passes made in the several standards—irrespective of failures, exemptions, and absentees—for the past and preceding years. The results may be thus tabulated:—

	Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI. and over.
1892 ...	1464	1491	1386	1241	979	739
1893 ...	1322	1400	1401	1080	968	950

From this it will be seen that, taking into account the increased attendance for the year, there is an appreciable falling off in Standards I. and IV., a slight falling off in Standards II., III., and V., and a very satisfactory increase in the number of children in Standard VI. or who had already passed that standard. We continue to examine the children who passed Standard VI. the previous year in hardened Standard VI. work, and, if the examiner is satisfied, we issue what is called a Standard VII. certificate. This is not necessarily required by the Education Act, but the regulations permit it, and the practice is found very useful in inducing children who pass Standard VI. at thirteen or fourteen years of age to remain another year at school.

The keener competition for the position of pupil-teachers, their improved class instruction, their special training in drawing, singing, and drill, and the extension of experimental-science instruction and kindergarten work, are doing much to improve the practical efficiency of the staff; and, where good direction and supervision are given, the work of the schools is advancing on improved lines, and a better and sounder education is imparted in a manner which affords far greater interest to the scholars than that which the older methods produced, or which any amount of hardening in spelling and arithmetic would lead to. Of course it is not every teacher who is aroused to the full importance of these issues, but we possess in a majority of the head teachers of the Wellington City schools a body of teachers of large experience, who are keenly alive to these issues, who are ever open to suggestions for improvements in method, and who are apparently always on the look-out for opportunities of extending their usefulness. As an instance of this, a meeting of the city head teachers, with the Inspectors and the instructor of the pupil-teachers in singing, was very lately held, at which it was resolved, with the sympathy and sanction of the Board, to form a School Choral Union. This, in our judgment, will serve a useful purpose, not only in giving further impetus to the teaching of singing, but also in giving more uniform direction to the class work, and in affording easier and more economical means of doing it.

We think the general work and management of the schools continue, on the whole, very satisfactory. There are a few instances in which we think very much better work could be done, and these cases have been specially reported on. Referring to the summary, of the ten schools in Class A, one was weak owing to the serious breakdown in the health of the head teacher, another was deficient in class work, and a third was suffering from the retention of weak teachers; but improved work was done in the higher classes of most of them, and five of them are specially commended in this respect. Of the seventeen schools in Class B, nearly all were more or less satisfactory, as is set forth in the special reports sent to School Committees; and six of them are reported as highly satisfactory. Of the twenty-three schools in Class C, we find several in which decidedly improved work will be looked for; but most of them are doing very satisfactory work. Of the twenty-five schools in Class D, there is only one which does not appear to be fairly meeting requirements; and most of those which have an apparently high percentage of failures are really in good hands. Since changes have been made in the teachers of one or two of the twelve aided schools the management of these is now fairly satisfactory.

The special infant schools, at Mount Cook, Te Aro, and Masterton, have an aggregate total number of 884 children. All these are now held in very good and suitable buildings; and we are pleased with much of the work done, and more especially with that of the Mount Cook Infant School, so long under the management of a very musical and specially qualified kindergarten mistress. This school may be looked upon as the centre from which our infant kindergarten system has radiated.

In the infant departments generally mat-plaiting, object-lesson work, and singing have received special attention. Very good reading is also a pleasing feature of these schools. We should like to see the School Committees of all schools in which there are infant departments—and this will include a large number—make arrangements whereby materials may be purchased for making mats and baskets, dressing dolls, &c., which may be taken home when made. This would encourage the production of better and more varied work, and the articles made would have special value in the eyes of both pupils and their parents.

We are pleased once again to refer to the advance made in elementary experimental-science teaching. The liberal outlay for apparatus and material granted by the Board has been productive of the best educational results. Year by year we find more of the assistant teachers taking up this work *con amore*; and the general increased interest on the part of the pupils in learning the why and the wherefore of everything is very noticeable.

The classes opened in Wellington and Masterton during the past year by Mr. Robert Parker for instructing teachers in the art of singing, and for training them in the methods of conducting class-singing in schools, are largely attended—about a hundred teachers meeting in Wellington and forty in Masterton. Mr. Parker's services are much appreciated by the teachers, and the effect of the training in the schools is already apparent in certain departments.

Drawing, as taught on the lines of the South Kensington first-grade course, continues to be successfully taken up throughout the district. Many teachers and pupil-teachers hold second-grade certificates; and the excellent work of the Wellington Technical School is now bearing fruit in the class instruction of our schools. Moreover, the director, Mr. Riley, visits all the large schools at least once a year in town and country, inspects the class work, and gives hints



as to the methods of instruction. The passes made in the various subjects of the annual first-grade examination may be taken as a fair indication of the growth of the work. The following are the numbers passed in the past and previous years :—

		Freehand.	Practical Geometry.	Scale.	Model.	Total Sectional Passes.
1892	...	638	807	543	144	2,132
1893	...	691	909	692	321	2,613

The officers sent by the Government from the military dépôt to teach British army physical exercises and extension drill in the city schools continue to do good service. It is, still, a matter of regret that changes have so frequently to be made in the officer told off for any particular school. The Board's drill-instructor continues to traverse the district several times a year, to give more frequent instruction in Indian clubs, pole drill, and Swedish drill in the city schools, and to instruct the pupil-teachers in all branches of drill. He has lately made some modifications in his programme which we think desirable. As a rule, boys are now taught military drill, extension movements, and Swedish drill; girls are taught Indian clubs and pole drill. Many of the head teachers and class teachers give valuable assistance in this work.

Almost every school has now made a beginning with its library, and the larger schools have added considerably to their number of volumes. The efforts put forth during the last two years for the establishment of school libraries have met with pronounced success, and much of this success is due to the co-operation of the School Committees. Much still remains to be done, and it is hoped no opportunity will be lost of adding to the stock of suitable readable volumes.

We wish now to bring under the notice of members of the Board for their favourable consideration the desirableness of introducing the magic-lantern (oil burners) into school work. In our opinion, it would afford the best and most attractive means of illustrating science, geography, and history lessons. The use of the lanterns for entertainments in aid of special school funds, such as library and lantern funds, would be of further service, and thus would help to supply a great want in social life—the need of rational and cheap popular amusement. To begin with, we recommend the Board to purchase two good lanterns and a stock of the best slides. These for a time may be lent in turns to large schools on condition that they open a lantern fund, by which in time they may purchase their own instrument. Then the Board can lend the lanterns to smaller schools, and enlarge their stock of slides to a great variety of most interesting and instructive subjects.

We have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Wellington.

ROBERT LEE,  
T. R. FLEMING, } Inspectors.

#### SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	303	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	799	9	37	106	647	14 0
" V. ...	1,191	37	69	117	968	12 9
" IV. ...	1,449	61	98	210	1,080	11 9
" III. ...	1,784	72	112	199	1,401	10 10
" II. ...	1,661	80	86	95	1,400	9 10
" I. ...	1,424	56	32	14	1,322	8 8
Preparatory ...	3,726	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	12,337	315	434	741	6,818	11 3*

\* Mean of average age.

#### HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Napier, 1st January, 1894.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the schools of the Hawke's Bay District for the year 1893.

The number of schools subject to the control of the Board is now fifty-six, as against fifty-four last year, the increase being due to the opening of subsidised schools at Maraekakaho and South Makaretu. Most of the schools have been visited for examination and inspection twice or thrice during the year. The schools at Hampden, Mohaka, and South Makaretu were not examined for results, the two former being closed on account of sickness when visited by me, and the latter was not opened until late in the school year.

The attendance at the Board schools continues to increase. Exclusive of the three schools named above, there were 6,425 children belonging to the schools at the time of inspection; and 6,383 pupils were presented for examination, compared with 6,202 for the corresponding period of 1892. The number of school places provided for this attendance is nearly sufficient were they distributed according to the needs of each school district; but, as must occur in an educational district which reaches several hundred miles, there is often an excess of accommodation in the smaller schools, whilst the larger schools are filled beyond what may be termed their fair working capacity.

In the matter of school supply it is satisfactory to find that a much-needed advance has been made during the year. The additions and repairs so recently completed have added largely to the conveniences of many teachers and children, and these are important aspects of school progress. School-sheds, which fulfil many useful purposes, have been provided in a number of districts, and I hope this form of school improvement will be continued until a like provision has been made for all schools. In a number of districts increased attention is being given by School Committees to what may be termed the artistic improvement of the schools. The training of children may be undertaken in many ways; but bright and cheerful surroundings are adjuncts which cannot be overlooked if taste and culture are to find a place in the schoolroom. I have many times directed attention to the differences of the school arrangements in the Board schools. The teaching staff are responsible for what may be set down as the ornamental and artistic features of the school-room. The old barn-like rooms of the past are not suitable for the wants of to-day; and it would be well if some of the teachers who have worked so long under the old conditions could realise that there is development in education as there is in everything else. Some school-rooms show but little change from year to year, except that, perhaps, a little more dust has accumulated in particular places; but the dulness and unattractiveness continue, and the absence of everything bright and inspiring shows how little education is understood in its higher aspects of training, and when interpreted outside the standard syllabus and departmental regulations. Waipawa continues well ahead of other schools in its artistic and ornamental arrangements, but Waipukurau, Norsewood, Napier (infants and side), Patutahi, Meanee, and Port Ahuriri are worthy of commendation, the internal arrangements showing that much care is bestowed upon them by the teachers in charge. In these days of "picture transfers" the useful and the scientific might easily be combined, and the schools could readily be furnished with valuable illustrations at small cost were proper means taken to select the necessary diagrams. In the Clive School a pleasing innovation has lately been introduced in the shape of a magic-lantern for purposes of instruction. The master uses it to illustrate geographical, historical, and scientific lessons, and when the plan is fully matured the pleasures of teachers and pupils will be largely increased. The shortening of educative processes by objective methods is the plan likely to be adopted in the near future, and I would like the Board to adopt some plan to encourage teachers in the use of this form of instruction in schools.

Ventilation, drainage, well-kept grounds, a suitable water-supply, and arrangements for the physical training of children are aspects of school management which seldom receive the attention their importance would suggest. Some Committees display much activity in these matters, and where this is the case, as at Patutahi, Gisborne, Hastings, Port Ahuriri, Waipawa, Norsewood, Kumeroa, and Woodville, the outside arrangements are often excellent.

Arbor-day was not kept as a general holiday among the schools, and few trees were planted by the children. As far as I am aware, Ashley-Clinton and Norsewood are the only schools where tree-planting was indulged in by the Committees, teachers, and children, although there are a number of school sites which would be improved by means of a few trees and shrubs if the Committees and teachers concerned would interest themselves in this useful work.

Fifty-three schools were examined for results, exclusive of the school under the control of the Meanee Catholic Mission, which was examined by special request. The presentations in standards, including fifty-one pupils in the class above Standard VI., numbered 4,095, or 64.1 per cent. of the whole number attending. There were 301 absent from examination, 145 were "excepts," 901 failed, and 2,697, or 42.2 per cent., passed for promotion to a higher standard. The following summary table contains information for each standard, and the total results are also given for the corresponding period of last year:—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes to Presentations.	Average Age of those that passed.
							Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	51	..	..	..	..	..	..
Standard VI. ...	200	15	5	53	127	63.5	14 1
" V. ...	444	39	19	116	270	60.8*	13 2
" IV. ...	688	66	19	183	420	61.0	12 4
" III. ...	841	51	33	220	537	63.8	11 2
" II. ...	930	54	39	169	668	71.8	10 1
" I. ...	941	76	30	160	675	71.7	9 2
Preparatory ...	2,288	..	..	..	..	..	..
Totals ...	6,383	301	145	901	2,697	65.8	11 8*
Totals for 1892...	6,202	92	141	780	2,970	74.5	11 8†

\* 42.2 per cent. of total belonging.

† 47.7 per cent. of total belonging.

These results show a serious falling off compared with the results for 1892. Compared with that year the number of children absent from examination increased from 92 to 301; the failures from 780 to 901; and the passes diminished in number from 2,970 to 2,697, or from 74.5 per cent. of those examined in 1892 to 65.8 per cent. in 1893. Seventeen schools only passed 50 per cent. or more of the pupils. In twelve of the remaining schools the percentage of failures was higher than that of the passes. Te Karaka, Wimbledon, Blackburn, Maraekakaho, Maraetaha, and Waerenga-o-kuri each occupied my time for a day, and their total passes number thirteen. Unsatisfactory as these figures are, they can hardly be interpreted as showing a falling off in general efficiency, or of

weakness, or indifference on the part of the teaching staff employed by the Board. The results arise solely from the operation of causes over which teachers and Committees have no control. The year has been a phenomenal one in the way of rainy days and sickness of various kinds. During the fifteen years I have travelled the district no similar year has been experienced, rainy days being the rule rather than the exception. The epidemic of measles began about the time of the midwinter holidays, and by the end of November it had spread over the whole of the school district. Of the 6,383 pupils belonging to the schools, nearly five thousand, or not less than 75 per cent. of them, were attacked by this complaint. In the Napier borough schools 1,289 children were affected out of 1,559 attending. In Gisborne 454 suffered, out of 667 attending. The Hastings School had a larger percentage of sufferers than either Gisborne or Napier, and in some districts the whole of the school population, with here and there an exception, was stricken down. Very few cases ended fatally, and parents did not appear to regard the disease as an infectious one, or as one to be avoided. At Makaretu, for example, only two pupils were reported as attending school who had not suffered from the epidemic, whilst not fewer than one-half of those present at the examination were imperfectly healed, although permitted to attend school and were examined by me. I noticed that one of the effects of the sickness upon the children was to make them mentally dull. In all schools the results were the same. They could not collect their thoughts, and were much slower than usual in all mental operation. To the credit of teachers and Committees it should be stated that most of the schools were carried on when a mere handful of children were in attendance, and when smaller salaries and allowances were looming ahead.

In previous years I have so fully pointed out defects in connection with the work of the schools that a few remarks will suffice at a time when teachers need encouragement rather than criticism. I would point out, however, that the larger schools must not be satisfied with the laurels they have gained in the past if they desire to maintain a high position among the schools of the district. The smaller schools are mostly staffed by young teachers who have been trained as pupil-teachers under the Board, and their work shows how well fitted they are for employment as principal teachers. Small schools like Wallingford, Wainui, Maharahara, Patangata, Matamau, and Tiniroto, are doing capital work, and each is managed by a teacher who has passed through one of the Board's schools as a pupil-teacher. A similar remark applies in the case of several assistant mistresses, and I notice with pleasure that some of the highest marks in the sewing examination were gained by schools where the assistant mistresses had been pupil-teachers. These examinations are carried on by number, and the examiners know nothing of either schools or pupils, so that there can be no mistake as to the quality of the work that is being done.

The number of children in the preparatory classes over the age of eight years is still large. More than 500 of those attending, or about 8 per cent. of the number belonging to the schools, are still to be found in the upper division of the infant classes. Napier, with 1,247 pupils, had 109 in the preparatory classes who were over eight years of age; Gisborne, with 667 pupils, had forty-one such children; and Woodville, with an attendance of 336, had thirty-two. Several schools had no children in the preparatory classes over eight years old, whilst the school at Maraetaha had 40 per cent. of such children in attendance. In the latter case, however, the children were either Maoris or half-castes, and they do not usually attend school at an early age. The same causes are assigned for the non-presentation of so many children as were stated by me last year. Bad health, natural dulness, irregular attendance, late admission, and inability of parents to provide boots or necessary clothing are entered in the returns with dull monotony. These reasons may be sufficient; but it appears to me that the indifference of parents has much to do with this low classification, and until there is some real form of compulsion, little or no improvement may be expected in this direction. The Napier School Committee have endeavoured to improve the attendance by the help of the law, but parents who are so negligent, as many appear to be, require something more drastic than a nominal fine in order to make them realise what they owe to their children's future and to their country.

The infant or preparatory classes have been sadly hindered during the late sickness. Many of the teachers have tried to do too much work under unfavourable conditions, and this has not produced satisfactory results. With half a year's attendance the usual syllabus of instruction could not be prepared; but due allowances have been made, in the hope that by judicious and systematic work the old standard will be reached another year. In a number of the larger infant departments a new supply of kindergarten appliances (gifts 1, 2, 3) is required, and it would be well if more encouragement were given to the lady teachers to make their rooms more attractive and suitable for the special training of young children.

The methods of instruction employed for the preparation of some of the standard subjects do not satisfy me. In arithmetic, for example, more oral instruction should be given, dealing with principles and reasons why. Many of the defects in the higher classes are the outcome of imperfect, or too hurried, preparation in the lower standards. Children should be made familiar with the use of the terms "sum," "product," "difference," "divisor," and "quotient" as early as possible, and they should have the fact strongly impressed on their minds that whatever answer is required in arithmetic something like it, either more or less, is stated in the question. In some schools there is a tendency to curtail processes without showing children the reason for so doing. In the earlier standards details are essential in the preparation of arithmetic, and abbreviations or "short cuts" should only be allowed after details have been fully mastered. Mental arithmetic is receiving more attention, and wherever this subject is well taught the work in ordinary arithmetic is satisfactory. This was very pronounced in the recent examination for scholarships, as all candidates, without exception, who gained good marks in mental tests stood highest on the list in this subject.

The methods adopted in a number of schools during a dictation lesson are bad. Three or four words are given out by the teacher, and they are repeated again and again in the most foolish way, as if children had no memory. Imagine a conversation carried on in this way, each person

repeating what he had to say three or four times. The plan would be no more absurd than it is for a teacher to repeat three or four words as many times to children in Standards IV., V., VI., and such a plan can only lead to carelessness and inattention. The objects of dictation should be, in the higher classes, to test attention, to train the memory, and to produce the best results with the least effort on the part of the teacher. Reading is improving, and in the majority of schools the children acquit themselves fairly well in this important subject. Geography continues to be well taught in most schools, and the adoption of geographical readers is creating increased interest in the subject. The mapping is usually well done. Composition, when taught systematically, is a subject in which the pupils usually acquit themselves with credit. Letter-writing should receive more attention, and in Standards V. and VI. this form of composition should not be neglected. The preparation of special work, as recommended in my annual circular to the teachers, is helping forward this subject, but I notice signs of weakness in letter-writing. Few children begin and end their letters in a proper manner. For example, some of the elder pupils, when writing me a letter on some subject, have commenced, "My dearest Mr. Hill," and have ended, "Your affectionate pupil"; but, although very right and proper under certain circumstances, they can hardly be accepted in an ordinary composition test. On the whole, drawing continues to make satisfactory progress. The recent modification of the drawing syllabus in favour of girls is a concession in the right direction, but the demands for boys in Standards V. and VI. are too difficult for the average pupils in country schools, and I have been compelled to accept a lower standard in certain cases. The writing does not yet satisfy me in a number of schools. The supervision when the subject is being taken is defective. I have more than once called attention to this matter, and next year failure will follow where there is evidence of careless teaching and supervision. The remaining subjects of the syllabus are known as class and additional subjects. They include history, grammar, geography, science, repetition, singing, drill, and needlework. The marks in the summary of results which is appended to this report show the relative efficiency of each school in them. Grammar has fallen off somewhat during the year, except in a few schools like Napier, Gisborne, Port Ahuriri, and Woodville, where a special piece like the "Prisoner of Chillon" was prepared. History is intelligently taught, and historical readers are coming into general use. Without exception, all the schools take repetition as an optional subject, and very fair marks were gained in what is one of the most valuable studies pursued by the children. Drill and calisthenics are neglected in too many schools, and it would be well were a regulation made by the Board requiring all children to receive instruction in these subjects. Object-lessons are usually well taught, but science is not a popular subject among the teachers, and this state of things must continue unless the Board render some practical help to the schools by providing suitable apparatus and diagrams. In a special report submitted by me to the Board in April last I pointed out that forty-two schools had no apparatus or appliances for demonstration or instruction in science, and I made recommendations which, had they been carried out, would have resulted in great benefit to the schools. The sewing results show commendable improvement. Thirteen schools gained the mark "excellent," and nineteen others made marks varying between "good" and "excellent." In other words, thirty-two schools are marked "efficient" in this important subject. The examiners commend the darning, in which instruction is being given in an increasing number of schools, and the netting and lace stitches of the Gisborne Girls is of excellent quality. With a view to further encourage sewing in the schools, I would suggest that a badge be offered for competition among the schools, the same to be held by the school gaining the largest proportion of "full marks" in the sewing examination. The issue of special badges would do much to foster the spirit of emulation among the children of the different schools; and they might be given for drill and calisthenics, singing, and even writing.

The Gisborne District High School continues to maintain its high standard of efficiency, although the work was thrown back in the latter part of the year by an outbreak of diphtheria. Half of those belonging to the upper school entered for the matriculation examination, but the results are not yet known. The remaining pupils were examined by me in Euclid, algebra, science, Latin, French, English, and arithmetic, and the results were very satisfactory.

Touching the discipline and moral tone of the schools, I have nothing but good to state. The aim of most teachers in the service of the Board is to do their best for the children intrusted to their care; and, as a rule, their duties are carried out faithfully and well. In tone and behaviour, the schools give good promise for the future, and if it be true, as the late Lord Beaconsfield once remarked, that the most precious treasure of England "is to be found not in its ships, factories, and well-cultivated farms, but in the *character* of its people," then we may be sure there is a rich future for the country. Character is not formed by the children merely passing the standards, for the schools are doing much more than this. To instil moral truths, and to lead to their practice by the observance of deeds of kindness, sympathy, and high regard for duty, is the kind of work that is being done. Character is being created in this way, and there is no form of teaching and training in the schools that gives promise of better results.

The tabulations appended hereto contain a summary of the results for each school examined, of its general condition under the heading "Manners and Tone," and of the marks gained in class and additional subjects. [Not printed.]

I have, &c.,

H. HILL, B.A., F.G.S., Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

## MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Blenheim, 22nd January, 1894.

I have the honour to present my third annual report on the public schools of the Marlborough Education District.

During the year just passed forty-eight schools have been at work in this district, an increase of four since my last report. Six new aided schools have been started, but one of these—Opua Bay—enjoyed an ephemeral existence of one quarter. Another, at Beatrix Bay, opened last year, was almost as short lived, and does not appear on this year's list. In addition to Opua Bay, aided schools were subsidised at Vernon, Wilson's Bay, Watomonga, Blackball, and Rai Valley, but one, or perhaps two, of these will, I fear, prove to be as temporary as the Beatrix Bay and Opua Schools. In such cases the Board's grant may be regarded as having been almost thrown away; and some plan should be devised to put a stop to this waste of public money. In two cases the closing of the schools was caused by the family leaving the neighbourhood, and in the others by the departure of the teachers. Even under the new and more liberal scale of payments to such schools the difficulty of obtaining the services of competent teachers is very great, and the position of such teachers, who generally have to live with the family, is often one requiring considerable tact, and adaptability to more or less uncongenial surroundings; but, though it may be difficult to say who is to blame in the cases referred to, it is not the less necessary to prevent the funds of the Board from being dissipated in such abortive experiments. Some guarantee of the permanence of any school should be required before the capitation is granted. Four of the aided schools, which were opened shortly before the examination, were not examined. Two others, Kaiuma and Flaxbourne, were temporarily closed; and one school, Waikakaho, neglected to present any scholars for examination at either of two places appointed for the purpose.

There were 1978 children on the rolls of the district at the date of the examination, a decrease of thirteen since last year. The proportion of children below Standard I. is, however,  $3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. less, and the number presented in standards has increased about 6 per cent. In 1892 the number of children above eight years old in Class P. was 161. This year the number is reduced to 108, or about 6 per cent. less than in the previous year. In the four largest schools in this district the percentage of children in Class P. who were above eight years old was, at Blenheim 18 per cent., Picton 32 per cent., Havelock 28 per cent., and Grovetown  $17\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. The reasons assigned for the retention of these children in Class P. are mainly four—namely, weak intellect, late entrance, irregularity of attendance, and sickness—and I have no doubt that in the majority of cases these reasons are valid.

The mean of the average ages at which the several standards are passed in this district remains steady at eleven years and eleven months, and this is about the highest in the colony. This may be partly explained by reference to the proportion of small aided schools in remote localities, where the children have generally reached a somewhat advanced age before their school days commence. A family generally consists of five or six children above five years of age before the Board's subsidy is applied for; and it is a very common experience to find children well advanced in their teens before passing the First or Second Standard. In one recently-established school a child (?) of twenty years succeeded, with difficulty, in passing Standard II.; but this represented less than a year's work.

For the convenience of comparison, I give the summary of results for last year and for this together:—

			Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.
1892	...	...	1,991	55	52	240	943
1893	...	...	1,978	118	38	144	1,055

The above table shows that the absentees were more than double in number this year, the failures nearly 100 less, and the passes over 100 more. Of those who failed last year, eighty-two were re-presented in the standards they then failed to pass, and, deducting these from this year's passes, there remains a net increase of thirty passes, with a decrease of ninety-six failures. Of the eighty-two scholars re-presented, thirteen were in Standard I., eight in Standard II., twenty-nine in Standard III., nineteen in Standard IV., eleven in Standard V., and two in Standard VI.

The great increase in the number of absentees is almost entirely due to the prevalence of measles at the time of the examination. At Picton, for instance, the epidemic was in full swing when the examination took place, and as many as forty-eight children in Standards I. to VI. were absent on that account.

In last year's report I directed the attention of the Board to seventeen schools that had recorded against them upwards of 25 per cent. of failures. This year there are ten recorded; two of these are schools only recently opened, two others are small aided schools, and another was without a teacher for a part of the year. Three of the remainder are for a second time in the same category, but the year's work has been so much interrupted by sickness and bad weather that any very great improvement could scarcely be expected, and in two of these there is about to be a change of teachers. Notwithstanding the drawbacks just referred to, three of the four schools specially reported on last year have greatly improved their positions. These are Blenheim Girls', Springlands, and Birchwood. The teacher of another has resigned; and the children attending the Waikakaho School were not present at the place appointed, a matter that calls for some explanation. I am particularly pleased to have to be able to report so marked an improvement in the results of the Blenheim Girls' School, which was examined this year by itself, and though, as regards order and discipline, there is still much to be desired, I am led to believe, from the improvement that has been effected in other directions, that in this respect also a change for the better will soon appear.

The number of half-days on which the several schools were open during the three quarters preceding that in which the examination was held seems a somewhat important factor in

estimating the value of the work accomplished. The number varies from 229 at Port Underwood to 354 at Te Awaite, the average for the district being 302. Assuming a proportional attendance for the other quarter of the year, it would appear that our schools were open on the average about 200 whole days in the year. In other words, Saturday, Sunday, and holidays absorb 45 per cent. of the year, leaving 55 per cent. for actual school work. If we take the school year to consist of 261 days—that is, excluding Saturdays and Sundays—the average would give about 23 per cent. of the year for holidays and 77 for school work. The extraordinary prevalence of sickness and wet weather has necessarily reduced the number of school meetings, so that the average duration of the holidays this year—eight and a half weeks—may be regarded as exceptional.

The number of scholars marked as liable to exception in the event of failure was 148, or about 10½ per cent. of the number presented in standards. The attendance of children below Standard I. is probably even more irregular, so that we may safely assume that in this district upwards of one-tenth of the children supposed to be receiving the benefits of the education system are really throwing away one-half of their school life. This is without considering the relatively large number who escape "exception" by only a few days more attendance. Neither does it appear that this has been an unfavourable year in this respect, as 11 per cent. were "excepted" in 1891, and 10 per cent. in 1892.

The summary of results in pass-subjects shows the extent to which, in the district as a whole, the work of those subjects has fallen off from last year's results. The only subject which exhibits any improvement is composition grammar, and this is chiefly due to the placing of formal grammar, in all standards for which it is prescribed except the fourth, among the class-subjects. The falling off is not serious, taking into consideration the unusually adverse circumstances of the past year: neither is it general in the district. An examination of the details for each school will show that some schools far exceed the average given in the summary in all or most of the subjects.

The Order in Council excusing girls from geometrical drawing was promulgated too late to afford any relief this year, as the examinations were half over when it reached this district. Had it been notified at the beginning of the school year the falling off in the results this year would probably have been considerably less than it is.

I am pleased to be able again to report favourably on some of our small aided schools, several of which have passed all the scholars presented. These little schools enjoy one very great advantage over ordinary schools in having an absolutely regular attendance; and when to this are added the efforts of really skilful, conscientious, and energetic teachers, supported by the authority of parents alive to a sense of their responsibilities and to the importance of making the most of the advantages they have secured for their children, it is not surprising that a large measure of success should be the result.

I shall now offer a few remarks upon some of the more important subjects as taught in our schools.

*Reading* on the whole is fairly well, and in some schools admirably, taught. As a rule it is fluent, correct, and given with a reasonable amount of expression in the upper classes; and in the lower standards the subject-matter is generally understood.

Of *Recitation* I cannot speak quite so favourably. In some cases the pieces learned were "few and short," nor did quality compensate for lack of quantity. Want of time, and the very meagre and unsatisfactory selections given in the reading-books, are, with some justice, urged in extenuation of the fault. As regards the latter objection, I have expressed my willingness to take recitations from any source chosen by the teacher, provided that they are suited to the ages and intelligence of the scholars.

The want of a second reading-book has frequently been pointed out, and would have been supplied long since but for the objection so often urged, that parents cannot afford so many books. This objection might be met by the Board supplying each school with one set of books for use only in school as reading-books. Two or three different sets might be obtained, and if carefully used these might be interchanged from time to time, thus giving all the schools the benefit of a greater variety of reading matter than could be afforded in any other way at so comparatively small a cost. The only obstacle to the immediate adoption of this plan is the financial one, which I hope will not prove insurmountable.

*Spelling and Dictation.*—Seventy-nine per cent. of passes in this subject does not seem at first sight very satisfactory, but when the nature of the tests employed is explained it will, I think, be admitted that the results are little, if any, less satisfactory than those in reading and writing. In the four lower standards the test consisted of twenty words taken from the reading-book in use, with the addition in Standards III. and IV. of some half-dozen lines of dictation. The pieces given for dictation in Standards IV., V., and VI. were all "unseen" passages from books similar to those in use in the several standards, and longer than the dictation tests of the lower standards. Twenty-four words were also given in Standard V., and thirty in Standard VI., these being taken from the reading-book in use.

*Writing* is well taught at nearly all our schools; some of them present almost faultless copy-books for inspection. A preference is becoming manifest for the perpendicular style of writing, which certainly presents several advantages; and some teachers have asked me to supply "upright" copy-books. While not wishing to offer any objection to their introduction I am convinced that it matters little what copy-book is used—it is the teacher, not the book, that really makes the good writer. The most successful teachers of writing I know of are those whose own writing—especially on the blackboard—is neat, well shaped, and easily legible. Teachers sometimes forget that they are virtually "setting copies" every time they write anything on the blackboard, and that if they do this in a careless, slovenly, half-legible style they cannot expect their scholars to attach much importance to qualities their teacher seems to think unnecessary. The blackboard is before the eyes of the children all day—their copy-books for half an hour.

*Arithmetic.*—The percentage of passes usually gained in this subject seldom appears commensurate with the amount of time and trouble generally expended on it. The very poor work done at some schools necessarily reduces the general average, but good results are obtained at many, and excellent work is shown at some. Several of the small aided schools also did remarkably well. There is much room for improvement in the direction of neatness and methodical setting out of the work, and numerous errors can be traced to hurried scribbling, with, as a consequence, badly formed figures, and in certain examples to the omission of a written explanation at each stage of the work. Where these points are attended to the result is nearly always satisfactory.

*Composition* shows satisfactory improvement in all standards but the third. Excepting a few of the largest schools and several aided schools, the children in the Third Standard appear to be ignorant of the nature of a simple sentence. The whole "composition" will be written without a stop of any kind until the end, the different statements being generally connected with the same expression throughout—"and so," "and then," &c. In all cases the subject proposed for composition was a short anecdote, taken from a book not likely to be known to any of the scholars, and read out or repeated twice.

*Geography* still remains the least satisfactory of the subjects taught in our schools. With a few brilliant exceptions (and those not all at large schools), the knowledge of the trade routes required in Standard IV. is very meagre, while the "rotation" and the "revolution" of the earth are frequently confounded, as also are "watershed" and "river basin," and sometimes "parallels" and "meridians" in the higher standards. Map drawing generally is far from good, and often the country supposed to be represented is quite unrecognisable from its shape. The use of the geographical readers, which are lying almost unasked-for on the shelves of the Board's office, would largely increase the children's interest in the subject, and would undoubtedly lead to a marked improvement in the results.

*History.*—Now that teachers are permitted to select for themselves a limited number of "persons and events" from a given period of English history, it necessarily follows that more numerous answers are given to the questions put by the examiner, but I doubt whether the change has been beneficial from a purely educational point of view, chiefly because the object of the alteration has been misunderstood by some teachers, who appear to be satisfied with giving the few words of the text book referring to the selected events to be committed to memory, while little real comprehension of the subject is apparent. With regard especially to the dates selected, very little, and sometimes nothing, beyond the bare names of the events connected with them can be given, and I often find by continued questioning that nothing else is known. It has been continually suggested that this subject should form the substance of a second reading-book, for which there is so much need in our schools. There are many historical readers that are admirable in their way, for instance, Arnold Foster's "Stories from English History," but I fear the expense will be a bar to the general introduction of such a book in our schools. I am rather surprised that so few teachers of small schools have taken advantage of the permission to combine classes for instruction in history and geography. Indeed, under clause 4 of the regulations this can be done with regard to any subject, and I am sure a wider recognition and practical application of this "freedom of classification" would often afford great relief to the sole teachers of schools having all the standard classes represented. At present only two of our schools have made use of this liberty.

The removal of grammar and analysis from the "pass" to the "class" group appears this year to have had the effect of lowering the efficiency of the instruction. This does not necessarily imply that the subject has been neglected by the teachers. The same result might arise from the scholars' knowledge that it is no longer necessary for a "pass." Theoretically the transference of any subject from the pass to the class group should not affect the thoroughness with which it is treated, but practically there is in almost all cases a marked difference in the results. It has been so in my experience with geography in Standard IV., and judging by this year's work it seems likely to be the case with grammar also. In the treatment of this subject some common faults in the parsing of the higher standards are the omission of important particulars altogether, or giving them in every possible order except the proper one; the use of ambiguous abbreviations, e.g., "ad." for "adverb" or "adjective." Others again use initial letters only (the letter "p" may stand for a great variety of words), as "him, pp, 3, s, m, o." "In." is used as an abbreviation for "infinitive," "indefinite," "indicative," "intransitive," &c. It would be a great advantage to the examiner if some uniform order of arrangement of the grammatical facts required in parsing were adopted by all teachers—say, the form given in Morris's grammar, page 120. This will save much trouble and annoyance, whether the examination be oral or written.

Vocal music does not at present receive much attention. At most schools it is entirely unknown, and at a few only of the larger ones it is taught, chiefly by ear. Several of our teachers have intimated their intention of adopting the tonic sol-fa method, and I have already supplied some modulators and song-books. I am sure there are few teachers who could not soon make themselves sufficiently acquainted with this system to be able to introduce singing into their schools with a fair prospect of success.

Military drill is admirably taught at Blenheim Boys' School, Tua Marina, Grovetown, and Renwick, and sufficient class drill at all the Board's schools to enable the necessary movements to be made with order and regularity.

On the whole, the work of the year has proved to be far more satisfactory than I was led to expect at the commencement of the examination. The reports that came from all parts of the colony with regard to the prevalence of measles were loudly re-echoed in this district. The very unusual amount of wet weather, with the frequent accompaniment, in Blenheim, of a flood which submerged the greater part of the streets, and compelled the closing of the school for two or three days, increased in no small degree the difficulties of the teachers; and the most gloomy forebodings of disaster at the coming examinations were freely expressed. That these have not been realised is

entirely due to the energy and perseverance of the teaching staff under the most disheartening circumstances.

At the close of my third complete year of work in this district I am able to express with much confidence my opinion as to the condition of the Marlborough schools, and as to the efficiency of their teachers; and it is to me a source of gratification that I can honestly congratulate the Board on having secured the service of a staff of teachers who, as a rule, are painstaking, earnest, and conscientious workers in the cause of education. Not a few of them are also eminently successful in their work, which need not fear comparison with that of any schools in the colony. That others have not been quite so successful is largely due, not to want of energy or persevering endeavours on their parts, but in some cases probably to a disinclination to part with old-fashioned ideas, to adopt later improvements in method, or to adapt their teaching to the altered circumstances and increased demands of modern elementary schools. I regret that I am bound to say that in one or two instances superior teaching ability is unfortunately marred by what, though once common, is now happily a rare failing in the teaching profession. I allude to intemperance. Of course in my official capacity I am not supposed to be aware of any transgressions in this respect, since none have fallen under my own observation; but I cannot pretend to be ignorant of what is a matter of common notoriety. It needs no elaborate argument to show that absence of sobriety on the part of a teacher is more to be deplored than even the want of high intellectual attainments; and it is a great mistake on the part of a Committee to condone an offence, repeatedly committed, which must sap the foundation of all good discipline, and destroy the feeling of respect with which a teacher should be regarded by his scholars, and what is perhaps worse, that must tend to familiarise the children with the vice, until in their eyes it ceases to be more than a venial offence, if it does not actually come to be regarded with gratification, as the occasion of extra holidays.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Marlborough.

JOHN SMITH, Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	28	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	90	3	1	6	80	14 2
" V. ...	140	8	4	19	109	13 7
" IV. ...	216	23	3	31	159	12 11
" III. ...	301	31	13	42	215	11 9
" II. ...	294	31	11	21	231	10 7
" I. ...	314	22	6	25	261	8 9
Preparatory ...	595	...	...	..	...	...
Totals ...	1,978	118	38	144	1,055	11 11*

\* Mean of average age.

NELSON.

SIR,—

2nd January, 1894.

We have the honour to submit to you our annual report on the Nelson public schools.

A hundred and one schools have been examined during the past year. Separate visits of inspection have also been paid to four-fifths of these. There were 5,852 names on the rolls of the schools on examination day, 5,500 children being present. The total number of scholars on the rolls at the end of the September quarter was 5,894.

The outcome of our examinations, on the whole, was hardly so satisfactory as it was in the preceding year. The exceptionally bad weather during the winter months, and an outbreak of measles later on, will fully account for any falling off in the majority of our schools. There were some cases, however, in which the work of the scholars was so poor that it would be hard to discover extenuating circumstances that would fully cover their demerits. Although it is pretty well understood by this time that a mere record of passes and failures will not show fully the state of any school, a heavy percentage of failures cannot be safely disregarded as a factor in estimating the value of the work done so long as the standard-pass system is in vogue. The eleven schools in which more than half of the children were plainly unequal to the work that they attempted evidently stand urgently in need of a reformation.

The tone and discipline of all but a very few schools leave nothing to be desired. Excellent order is maintained, without, as a rule, any approach to harshness; the schools giving a visitor the idea of their being hives of cheerful industry.

*Regulation as to Exceptions.*—Nothing has caused such general and outspoken dissatisfaction among our teachers as the regulation which compels Inspectors to record the failures of such scholars as have fallen short of the prescribed minimum of attainment, but who have attended for even a fraction more than half the number of times during which school has been open during the year. This regulation seems to have been framed on the singular assumption that the work of the syllabus is so easy that it can be overtaken by the average scholar within half of the school year. The practical outcome of this rule is to show our schools in a much worse light than they really deserve. Not only are scores of children set down as "failures" who have attended school, it



may be, for only a day or two more than the stipulated minimum, but, in many cases, nearly the whole of even this meagre attendance has been made during the earlier part of the year—so long before the examination that much of what has been learned may have been forgotten by then. It is to be hoped that at the forthcoming Conference of Inspectors some remedy for this wrong will be devised. No reform that does not approximate to an exception in favour of those who have attended during less than two-thirds of the school year can be regarded as satisfactory.

*Non-presentation in Standard I. of Children more than Eight Years Old.*—The number of children returned under this head is 208, about the same as it was last year. The causes assigned for keeping these children back may be arranged under three heads: Irregularity of attendance accounts for seventy, shortness of school life for ninety, dulness for forty-eight. The total number thus held back is not unreasonably large, the explanation given by the teacher in each case being sufficient.

The following brief estimate of the comparative success with which each subject included in the school course is being taught will probably be useful, provided it be distinctly understood that criticisms, from the nature of the case, are only of general, and not of universal, application. In dealing with so many widely diverse cases, the mean can only be taken into account in a general survey. Extremes, whether of merit or demerit, will be treated separately in the detailed estimate of the present condition of each school.

*Reading.*—As long as our teachers devote so much time and pains to the art of reading intelligently, as most of them do at present, the continued success of this portion of the school course is pretty well assured. In a few schools, however, the habit of suddenly dropping the voice at the end of every sentence has become inveterate, and quite spoils the effect of the reading. As this defect has invariably been commented on by the examiners wherever it exists, and as it is quite curable when reasonable pains are taken, there is no excuse for its being suffered to continue, and its recurrence at next examination will be treated as it deserves.

*Writing.*—The improvement in handwriting referred to in last year's report has extended with the extended use of the vertical style of writing in this district. Slovenly and ill-shaped handwriting, already rare, ought, given reasonable care, to entirely disappear from our schools in a year or two at furthest.

*Spelling.*—Great attention is still paid to this subject, the result being that our more advanced scholars, at least, are rarely caught tripping with words in ordinary use; but, as will probably always be the case where the pupil's range of reading is narrow, and his vocabulary consequently limited, mistakes are still common enough in such outside words as "phenomenal," "metropolitan," and "antipodes." Nearly all that is practicable seems, however, to have been done in this direction.

*Arithmetic.*—Little fault can reasonably be found either with the methods of teaching generally adopted or with the amount of time, pains, and skill devoted to this subject in our schools. And yet it must be admitted that year after year more of our scholars break down in arithmetic than in all the rest of the subjects included in the syllabus put together. The faculty of computation would seem to be most unequally distributed. It is not unusual to find in a class the members of which are of similar age, and have received similar instruction, that a fourth of the pupils can solve correctly, and well within the prescribed time, all the six questions contained in the paper set. Another fourth, and that by no means the dullest in other matters, can barely manage one, or, at most, two sums. This great inequality of arithmetical power renders the task of an examiner exceedingly hard, for, if the difficulties of the paper are to be toned down to the capacity of the slower scholars, the powers of the best arithmeticians would be very inadequately tested. What seems at first sight the obvious remedy—to lengthen the period daily devoted to arithmetic—is not practicable. As it is, an unduly large portion of the school-day is appropriated to this subject when regard is had to the number and importance of the other matters to be taught. The present mode of classification, rendered necessary by the demands of the standard-pass system, is really responsible for this, as for so many others of the defects in our public schools. Were the scholars graded and taught according to their arithmetical capacities, without reference to their attainments in other respects, the anomalies pointed out would disappear.

*English.*—Some improvement has been made during the past year both in the length and the quality of the essays written by the older scholars. This improvement may be partly due to the fact that the subject-matter, as a rule, was taken from a book chosen as the reading-test on examination day. One fault, however, cropped up in so many instances as to argue a serious defect in the method of teaching composition in many of our schools. In these the pupils, with few exceptions, had not acquired the art of breaking up what they wrote into sentences or paragraphs. Their essays ran on for half a page or more, clumsily pieced together by "and's," "so's," and "then's," without the relief of even a comma, not to speak of a capital, or a full stop. A reformation is urgently needed here, which shall insist, as a beginning, on the composition being broken up into short, compact sentences, in which not only the period, but the semicolon and the comma should find a place.

*Geography.*—On the whole, the result of the examination in geography showed little or no advance on the somewhat feeble performances of last year. Scores of altogether unsatisfactory papers were sent in by even the older scholars, physical and political geography being alike defective. The best work was that of the Third Standard scholars, for whom the prescribed range of study, though narrow, is laid down very definitely. In the Fourth Standard, where geography figures as only a class-subject, the papers of the bulk of the candidates were so meagre and so slovenly that, had this been continued as a pass-subject, the list of failures would have been hugely swollen.

*Recitation.*—Although it may be doubtful how far the practice of recitation helps forward the art of reading, there can be no doubt as to the beneficial effects of committing to memory passages of well-known English poetry at a period of life when that organ is "wax to receive and marble to retain." Something worth keeping is sure to abide in after-life, even with the most forgetful.

*History*.—For the same reason the acquiring of some knowledge of what may be termed the dry bones of history may be defended. The more prominent facts and dates, once thoroughly mastered, will serve as pegs on which an ampler clothing may be hung by those whose taste leads them in that direction. It is certain that the results of the oral examinations in history show that the majority of our children have been well grounded in the modest array of facts insisted on.

*Drawing*.—The omission of geometrical drawing from the course required from girls will doubtless prove an appreciable boon to one-half of our children. It only remains to relieve the boys from the grievous burden imposed upon them, especially in the Fourth Standard. There is every reason to be satisfied with the honest attempts made by the teachers to comply with the excessive demands of the syllabus, which has evidently been inspired by specialists, and is the laughing-stock of all those who have any sense of proportion.

*Vocal Music*, which at one time promised to become general, has gradually receded into the background, and finds a place in few but our larger schools, and by no means invariably even in those.

We have, &c.,

W. C. HODGSON.

G. A. HARKNESS, M.A.

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

#### SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	165	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	413	25	16	109	263	13 11
" V. ...	637	22	43	191	381	13 0
" IV. ...	689	31	33	117	508	12 0
" III. ...	687	24	50	158	455	10 10
" II. ...	761	28	18	66	649	9 10
" I. ...	768	21	30	83	634	8 9
Preparatory ...	1,732	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	5,852	151	190	724	2,890	11 5*

\* Mean of average age.

#### WESTLAND.

SIR,—

Hokitika, 9th March, 1894.

I have the honour to present the Inspector's annual report for the year 1893.

When, on the 1st July, my term of office began, the inspection of schools had already been concluded. Consequently the scope of this report is limited, as, in the absence of inspection visits, it is impossible to more than imperfectly estimate the value of the methods adopted by the teachers, or of many general features of school-work. As separate reports have been presented on the examination of the pupil-teachers, the scholarship candidates, and the secondary class at the Hokitika District High School, the attention of the Board is here directed only to the ordinary primary work of the schools.

During the latter half of the year all the schools in the district were examined. To each examination report was attached a brief and general estimate of the value of the results. This is intended to weaken the effect of the percentage of failures as an appraisal of the teachers' work, which may be of good quality in schools showing, for various reasons, a comparatively high percentage of failures. It is very important that Committees and teachers should not be satisfied with the mere passing of a certain number of pupils. In addition to the general estimate addressed to the Committee, a memorandum to the teacher served to point out in detail any matters requiring attention.

The teachers of the district, as a body, are zealous, painstaking, anxious to overtake the work of the syllabus, and very ready to adapt their methods in accordance with suggestions made. It is therefore in expectation of benefit to the schools that certain weaknesses are pointed out. With a few exceptions, the work of the larger schools, and of the upper standards in all schools, reached a satisfactory state of efficiency. The weakest of the pass-subjects were reading and writing. In each, only two or three schools showed work of really good quality. Arithmetic, composition, and drawing were in a majority of schools successfully taught.

The syllabus of work presented by pupils in Class S7 was that of Standard VI., greater thoroughness being aimed at. At present I recommend this as the wiser course. It is in the infant and lower-standard classes that the greatest weakness in method, and consequently in thoroughness, is shown. With few exceptions, reading and writing especially are not taught systematically, so as to secure necessary gradation in the progress of the work. Teachers in charge of infant classes should present at the annual examination a definite syllabus of work, bearing internal evidence that difficulties have been overcome in proper order. There was frequent absence in these classes of attention to useful tables, and to the mental exercises in numbers, intended to form a basis on which to build up the arithmetic of the higher classes.

I have taken every opportunity to urge the teachers to direct their efforts only to what can be efficiently taught, to keep to the most important principles and information of each subject, and to go into details only as far as the circumstances of school or class will permit.

Greater completeness of preparation is expected in reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, and composition. Teachers of aided and other small schools, especially, have been advised to arrange, in the other subjects, to secure definite results—to modify the amount rather than the quality of the work.

It will be useful to add a few notes in connection with the individual subjects of instruction. Reading, as I have stated, has not reached a high standard of efficiency. The fault lies in the treatment of the subject in the lower divisions of the schools. Lessons should be given in which special attention is directed to pronunciation of words, fluency, phrasing, expression, and comprehension of the language and matter. It is only by systematic teaching that good results can be obtained. In the infant department much greater attention should be given to phrasing and expression. It will be found, if this is done, that more rapid progress will be made. The omission of the letter "h," the curtailment of the affix "ing," the mispronunciation of the words "a" and "the," and the neglect of the necessity to sustain the voice at the minor stops were all very common. While skilful teaching will overcome in a great measure the faults referred to, real excellence will not be secured unless a wider range of subject-matter is provided. I am not prepared at present to recommend the use of additional reading-books, as, until many of the mechanical difficulties of the subject have been overcome, it will be better to concentrate the efforts of the scholars on the lessons of a single book. The pupils of the higher standards should be, however, directed and encouraged to pursue a course of useful reading, where possible, outside the ordinary routine. Spelling was generally well prepared. The programmes of recitation were very full, and the knowledge of the verses accurate. This subject shared with reading a lack of suitable force and expression.

Like reading, writing is, again with honourable exceptions, in need of improvement. This applies with greatest force to the junior classes. An illustration of the course to be followed is given in the first copy-book of the series in use; yet a disregard of all system was the rule. Including figures, all writing should be performed, especially by the youngest pupils, slowly and with great care. Time given thus is saved in consequence of the more rapid progress produced by the carefulness called into play.

It was seldom that I found the requirements in arithmetic insufficiently mastered, and excellent papers were frequently presented. Seeing that from a quarter to a third of the school time is devoted to this subject alone, a considerable amount of success is to be expected. Time might be economized and the value of the work increased if in the infant classes and lower standards tables and exercises in numbers received more attention. Teachers should spare no effort to eradicate the habit of counting on fingers—a defect very prevalent in the schools of the district. Another cause of weakness in a few schools is the use of formulæ in working certain rules by the higher standards.

Composition has been in general efficiently taught. Some attention is needed to the proper forms of letter-writing. Grammar was uneven in quality, being often neglected, presumably owing to its position as a class-subject. In hardly any school have I found the conjugation of the verb successfully mastered by the pupils of Standard V. Of this particular, as of the whole subject, the parts most necessary for the attainment of correct speech and composition should receive the greatest attention.

The treatment of the subject geography was in several respects unsatisfactory. Many teachers had attempted to cover too wide a field, and, in consequence, the answers to questions on important matters were generally too meagre to be of value. Pupils, too, were frequently able to give a full verbal description of the position of a river or a town, but failed to point it out on the map. Here, again, more thorough methods are necessary.

In view of the conditions under which many of the schools work, a satisfactory attempt has been made to overtake the work in remaining subjects of the syllabus. In drawing, a number of the teachers not only produced good results in the standard work, but also entered pupils for the first-grade certificate under the Wellington School of Art. The main difficulty in many schools is a want of knowledge of certain branches on the part of the teachers. This could be overcome to a great extent by placing drawing among the compulsory subjects in the pupil-teacher course, and by encouraging the junior assistants to secure second-grade certificates. In all the schools the model drawing suffers from the want of suitable models.

As much as can be expected at present is being done in the teaching of science in the schools. It should be understood, however, that mere definitions of scientific terms and principles are insufficient without interesting teaching by means of simple explanation, experiment, and illustration. The lists of object-lessons given during the year were in nearly all cases too short, and the work for the various classes was often badly graded.

A fair attempt has been made to satisfy the syllabus in history. It has been suggested, with reason, that reading-books containing an account of the securing of our rights and liberties, a history of the British Colonial Empire, and simple lessons in civic life and its duties would better serve the purpose of colonial youths than the usual course of English history. Such a plan would revive interest in history as a subject of instruction.

Singing is excellently taught in several of our larger schools, but it is not widely adopted as a subject of instruction. Physical education is almost without an exception confined to a little company drill, and that is taught by only a few teachers. In school the conduct of the pupils during the examination was satisfactory, but in the street I have noticed a somewhat frequent adoption by the pupils of the colonial salutation, "Hullo! Mr. ———," when addressing elders, including the teachers. As the tone of the address generally suggests good intentions, a little instruction in more usual forms of politeness is probably all that is necessary.

Satisfactory marks were in most cases obtained by the girls in sewing. In view of the derangement of the work in mixed schools caused by the sewing lessons, it is to be regretted that the amount of work required is not reduced. In these days of sewing-machines, much of the sewing at present demanded could well be dispensed with. The permission to omit geometrical

drawing for girls was not taken advantage of, and the plan is not, apparently, very popular among the teachers.

I have not yet had opportunity to consider the use made of home lessons in this district. Experience proves that when moderate in amount, and confined chiefly to the preparation of memory work following lessons given by the teacher, the setting of home lessons is, with parents, rather popular than otherwise.

The conditions under which household schools were carried on received severe criticism in the last annual report. No doubt as a result of these strictures the conditions have evidently improved, as a separate room, fairly comfortable, though plain to a degree, is provided in each case for the school work, to which it seems to be devoted entirely.

I have, &c.,

A. J. MORTON, B.A., Inspector.

#### SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ... ..	39	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ... ..	89	7	2	16	65	14 4
" V. ... ..	140	7	4	21	107	12 7
" IV. ... ..	202	10	5	36	151	12 6
" III. ... ..	226	5	7	29	185	11 8
" II. ... ..	204	2	3	8	191	10 4
" I. ... ..	212	4	5	22	181	8 11
Preparatory ... ..	523	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ... ..	1,635	35	26	132	880	11 9*

\* Mean of average age.

#### NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 29th January, 1894.

We have the honour, in accordance with the regulations for the inspection of schools, to submit the annual return of the results of examination in the schools of the North Canterbury District for the year 1893.

The following tables and the detailed appendices annexed contain in the customary form the information which Inspectors are directed to furnish for the schools of their districts. The tables include also, as usual, a number of proportions which have been calculated as likely to prove interesting or useful for purposes of comparison.

TABLE A.—PASS-SUBJECTS.

Classes.	Number presented.	Number absent.	Number excepted.	Number failed.	Number passed.	Proportion presented of Total Sch'l-roll.	Proportion passed of Total Sch'l-roll.	No. of Schools presenting.	Average Age of those that passed.
Above Standard VI.	174	...	...	...	...	0.83	...	51	Yrs. m.
Standard VI. ...	1,079	43	14	153	869	5.12	4.13	134	13 11
" V. ...	1,806	104	47	323	1,332	8.58	6.33	155	13 1
" IV. ...	2,879	259	94	600	1,926	13.67	9.15	170	12 3
" III. ...	3,233	222	153	514	2,344	15.35	11.13	171	11 1
" II. ...	2,911	225	59	145	2,482	13.82	11.79	175	9 10
" I. ...	2,764	254	22	98	2,390	13.13	11.35	165	8 9
Preparatory ...	6,213	...	...	...	...	29.50	...	178	...
Totals for 1893	21,059	1,107	389	1,833	11,343	100.00	53.86	179	11 6*
Totals for 1892	20,497	451	425	1,917	11,404	100.00	55.64	171	11 6

\* Mean of average age.

TABLE B.—PASS-SUBJECTS: PROPORTIONS CALCULATED IN PERCENTAGES.

Classes.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Failed, of Sum of Passes and Failures: Percentage of Failures.	
					1893.	1892.
Standard VI. ... ..	3.99	1.30	14.18	80.54	14.97	15.46
" V. ... ..	5.76	2.60	17.88	73.75	19.52	22.01
" IV. ... ..	9.00	3.27	20.84	66.90	23.75	24.04
" III. ... ..	6.87	4.73	15.90	72.50	17.98	18.37
" II. ... ..	7.73	2.03	4.98	85.26	5.52	5.91
" I. ... ..	9.19	0.80	3.55	86.47	3.94	4.85
All classes ... ..	7.54	2.65	12.49	77.31	13.91	14.39

TABLE C.

Class-subjects.	Average Marks.	No. of Schools.	Additional Subjects.	Average Marks.	No. of Schools.
Grammar ... ..	45.69	177	Repetition and recitation ...	12.88	178
History ... ..	42.86	177	Drill and exercises ...	10.63	143
Geography ... ..	52.92	179	Singing ... ..	11.34	134
Elementary science, object- lessons, &c. ... ..	42.18	179	Needlework ... ..	14.40	174
Average of percentage on class-subjects ... ..	46.20	179	Subject-matter of reading- lessons ... ..	12.71	178
			Average of additional marks	56.74	178

The summarised results as shown in these tables require little by way of comment. Except in the number of absentees, for which the exceptionally severe and persistent epidemic of measles fully accounts, the figures coincide very closely with the returns of the previous year, and the differences to be observed are for the most part in confirmation of tendencies to which attention has already been directed.

In the 179 schools examined, 21,059 children were presented, an increase of 562 on the total for 1892. Of this number, 11,343 passed their respective standards, giving in the calculation directed by the regulations a "percentage of passes" of 53.86 and a percentage of failures of 13.91, as against 55.64 and 14.39 respectively in the previous year.

In the classification of the schools, Standard IV. to the class above Standard VI. contained 28.20 per cent. of the total enrolment, an increase of 2.09; Standard I. to Standard III., 42.3 per cent.; and the preparatory division 29.5, a decrease of 1.55 and 0.53 respectively.

Of the 6,213 children below Standard I. there were in all between 950 and 960, or  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the roll-number, over eight years of age at the time of examination. Some of these would undoubtedly have appeared in the presentation at a higher stage had the unfavourable conditions of the year not deprived so many of the schools of the usual period of preparation; but, as it is, the proportion is somewhat less than before, and we have again to express our belief that the reasons assigned for the retention of these children in Class P are generally such as to satisfy the Inspector that their best interests have received full consideration.

On the subjects of instruction and the general condition of the schools we append a report from Mr. Ritchie, who, though appointed only in the middle of the year, has had ample opportunities of forming a judgment from the inspection and examination of schools of all types situated in different parts of the district. His colleagues feel that a separate and independent expression of opinion from one who has so long occupied the position of a teacher in its service must be specially appreciated by the Board. Mr. Ritchie says,—

"Prior to entering upon my present duties it had been my opinion that the efficiency of public instruction in this district was steadily improving; that the schools in general were not only producing better work, but that this improved work was being accomplished within a shorter period of school attendance; and that, consequently, the cost to the State of preparing pupils to pass the higher standards was being very materially reduced. After inspecting or examining some sixty schools, situate in all parts of the district, with attendances ranging from 700 down to the modest average of five pupils, it is very gratifying to report that in all important essentials my estimate has been confirmed. In some of the largest, as well as in some of the smallest schools, results have been achieved which should be quite satisfactory to all who are interested in public-school education.

"Among pass-subjects, arithmetic, writing, composition, and freehand drawing have, in many instances, attained a degree of proficiency which should satisfy even the most exacting of examiners. It is not implied, however, that such excellent results are universal, or that it is usual to find in the same school a marked superiority in the treatment of all the subjects above named. Each teacher has, naturally, some favourite subjects, and, in my opinion, nothing but good can arise from allowing

as much liberty in dealing with these as is consistent with the exigencies of the syllabus set forth by the department. The impression, however, remains that in assessing the work of individual pupils these are the subjects which have, on the whole, caused least anxiety to the examiner.

“The important subject of arithmetic has in some instances betrayed undesirable weakness. This was especially noticeable in the case of girls in Standards V. and VI. It is within my own experience that many of the elder girls in these standards take but a languid interest in the more advanced parts of arithmetic, being rather disposed to bestow attention upon subjects of a literary cast. So long as grammatical knowledge was essential to a pass in these standards the mental training obtainable therefrom was no bad substitute for that discipline of the reasoning powers which the study of arithmetic ought to afford. Grammar, however, has been assigned a place in the group of class-subjects, and in many schools the resulting treatment has been such as completely nullifies any educative influence it once possessed. For the present, therefore, it seems evident that, quite apart from its mere practical utility, sound arithmetical training becomes more and more important.

“Writing, as a pass-subject, seems at present to call for no special comment. In almost every school yet visited writing has been taught with such a measure of success that no great difficulty arose in estimating its value. Mention may be made, however, of the peculiar fact that in no instance within my recollection has writing attained equal excellence with freehand drawing.

“By the last revision of the syllabus composition became a pass-subject in all standards above the Second, and this led to its receiving increased attention. The outcome of this change, so far, seems to lie mainly in a greater facility of expression; but my own prepossessions are by no means favourable to mere verbosity, especially when marred by frequent technical errors. In two of the smaller schools examined towards the end of December it came upon me as a pleasing surprise to find compositions showing careful attention to those minutiae of detail which distinguish scholarly work. There is much to be said in favour of the system of examination formerly followed by my senior colleagues, whereby grammar and composition were taken as complementary to each other, strong composition being allowed to counterbalance weak grammar, while accuracy in grammar might supplement a meagre exhibit in composition. The proficiency which children show in this subject is in general directly proportionate to their range of private reading. As a rule I have found the best work in schools where at least a fair proportion of the pupils had access to a library and made some use of its contents. The attitude which a section of the community has lately assumed on the question of ‘home lessons’ still further accentuates the importance of good school-libraries. Although the idea of founding these had strong pretensions to antiquity many years ago, the present seems an opportune time to urge their claims upon public support. The ridiculous, if not mischievous, profusion with which prizes (so-called) have been awarded during recent years is a matter calling for serious consideration. A reprehensible feature of the competition between neighbouring schools has manifested itself in the direction of one striving to underbid the other in bestowing prizes upon the slightest possible provocation. An indolent child who has consistently striven to achieve the least possible amount of work during the year, and who at its close has barely escaped failure in the standard examination, may be chronicled as a deserving prize-winner, may carry home a book gorgeous enough in its external appearance, and may possibly allow its contents to remain for ever thereafter a hidden mystery. Such practices in awarding prizes are hardly likely to develop very exalted ideas on the subject of duty. A large proportion of the prize funds might, with material advantage, be expended in the equipment of well-selected libraries. Cheap reprints of works by standard authors are now so numerous, and show such excellence so far as typography is concerned, that there is no excuse for permitting our young people to grow up ignorant of the rich inheritance bequeathed to them by our best writers.

“The spread of education and the cheapness of good books have probably combined to bring into disuse the practice of reading aloud. Though there may at present be less real need for accomplished readers than there was formerly, still it is very desirable that something beyond mere mechanical accuracy in reading should be attempted in the public schools. In the majority of them fairly intelligent reading is obtainable, but in a few others the margin for improvement still remains a wide one. The reading of suitable passages with due attention to emphasis and expression may be made a mental exercise of no small importance.

“Of the class-subjects laid down in the syllabus, history under present conditions possesses very questionable value. Its whole scope, as defined by the regulations, is specially adapted to the methods of a teacher prepossessed in favour of the art called ‘cram.’ Under such circumstances much credit is due to those who still utilise the history lesson for the purposes of mental training in general, as distinguished from a mere effort of memory. Still greater is the credit due to teachers who, beyond all this, endeavour to awaken a patriotic spirit, and to inform among their pupils some appreciation of what we owe to the worthiest makers of British history.

“In some of the schools visited very meritorious specimens of mechanical drawing were shown. Such work, being quite outside the ordinary routine, seems to deserve special mention. Without placing this additional subject on a list already somewhat formidable, it might be made possible to recognise officially skilled labour bestowed so freely, and so useful in its tendency.

“With regard to the important matters of order, discipline, and behaviour of pupils, the schools of North Canterbury appear generally to good advantage. Considering the extent to which children are influenced by home surroundings, it would be unjust to burden the teachers with the entire responsibility in those few instances where some shortcoming is apparent under this heading.”

We have, &c.,

L. B. WOOD, M.A.,	} Inspectors.
W. J. ANDERSON, LL.D.,	
THOS. RITCHIE, B.A.,	

The Chairman, Education Board, North Canterbury.

## SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 7th March, 1894.

I have the honour to present my report on the schools in this district for the year 1893.

Visits of inspection were paid to nearly all the schools in the earlier part of the year. A report of each visit was read before the Board, and then forwarded to the Chairman of the School Committee for the information of the Committee and the teacher. Fifty-nine schools were open during the year, and all were examined by the end of December except the two schools at Hakateramea, which were not visited for examination till near the end of January.

The following table shows the results of the examinations for the whole district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ... ..	79	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ... ..	243	8	4	39	192	13 10
" V. ... ..	408	33	12	90	273	13 0
" IV. ... ..	640	38	28	145	429	12 2
" III. ... ..	725	41	31	124	529	11 2
" II. ... ..	671	28	21	43	579	9 10
" I. ... ..	691	43	15	33	600	8 9
Preparatory ... ..	1,552	...	...	...	...	...
Totals for 1893 ... ..	5,009	191	111	474	2,602	...
Totals for 1892 ... ..	5,002	146	112	478	2,599	...

The number of pupils presented on the examination schedules was 5,009, of whom seventy-nine had already passed the Sixth Standard, 1,552 were in the preparatory classes, and 3,378 were entered for examination in one or other of the standards. Of the 3,378 in Standards I. to VI., 3,187 were at school on the examination day, and 2,602 passed the standards for which they were presented. Of those that were not successful, 111 were "exceptions," and 474 "failures." The percentage of failures, estimated on the class-rolls, exclusive of absentees and exceptions, was 15.4.

A comparison of this year's summary for the whole district with last year's shows a remarkable closeness in the results: On the roll, 5,009, against 5,002; present at examination in standards, 3,187, against 3,189; absent, 191, against 146; excepted, 111, against 112; failed, 474, against 478; passed, 2,602, against 2,599; percentage of failures, 15.4, against 15.5; average percentage of marks for class-subjects, 53, against 52; average of marks for additional subjects, 57, against 55. The advantage, though a slight one, is with the results for this year except in the matter of absentees; but, with the measles epidemic still fresh in every memory, the increase in the number of absentees need cause no surprise; the wonder is that it was not greater. I had many opportunities of noting the fine spirit displayed by both boys and girls in braving the ordeal of the examination, some of them scarcely at the convalescent stage, and others with the spots of the disease all but showing.

The number of children over eight years old presented in Class P. amounts to 243, as against 281 last year. This is a gratifying and substantial reduction for one year. Written explanations of the reasons for not presenting such children in Standard I. were submitted by the teachers; and from these it appears that 42 per cent. of the children were irregular attendants, 35 per cent. were comparatively recent admissions, and 23 per cent. were accounted too dull to be prepared for the examination. In testing the work of the preparatory classes I paid close attention to the performances of the children over eight years old, and I am satisfied the teachers have shown good judgment in withholding as many as they did from examination in Standard I.

*Reading.*—The reading of the children in the First and Second Standards is better than it was a few years ago, though there is still room for great improvement. Many a time when I have had good reason to find fault with the reading I have felt my position strengthened by the clear statement in regulation 16 of what constitutes good reading; and, in directing the attention of teachers to this statement, I like to lay stress on the fact that proper emphasis and tone are to be insisted on even in the First Standard. Our school children as a rule read too little, and so long as most of them get through only one class-book in a year, no great advance may be looked for. Arranging the schools in four groups, and taking account of all the standards, I find that in the first group, consisting of over a fourth of the schools, the reading of the classes as a whole possessed distinct features of merit; in the second group, consisting of about one-third of the schools, and containing the great bulk of the scholars, it was fairly good; in the third group, consisting of about one-fourth of the schools, it was rather poor in quality; and in the fourth group I might name at least half a dozen schools where it was decidedly bad. By every means and device the teacher should strive to give his scholars such a command of reading that they will feel pleasure in reading by themselves, and, in the exercise of their power, find themselves possessed of the most effective instrument for their own advancement and culture.

*Writing.*—Writing is relatively much better in the lower than in the higher classes; and yet it cannot be because of any inherent difficulty that the promise of success shown in the earlier stages is not fulfilled as the children pass on to the higher classes. The systematic teaching and painstaking correction of faults, with abundant practice found necessary in the earlier stages, give place in many instances to simple and insufficient practice in copy-books in the upper classes, with supervision more or less strict according to the standard of attainment the teacher has accustomed his scholars to aim at. To make the writing much better than it is, direct teaching and free

use of the blackboard must be continued in the writing lessons right through the standards from the lowest to the highest. Even in one year a school whose reputation for writing is of the poorest may be brought up to rank with the best.

*Spelling.*—The dictation and spelling tests have, as usual, been taken from the class reading-books. The results in most cases have shown with how much industry the lessons have been ransacked for every passage and word that might cause a child to trip during examination, and the reward of all this labour has been a strong pass in spelling in by far the greater number of our schools. In about a fifth of the schools, either through less diligence in preparation, or on account of a loose mode of correction and revision of mistakes, far too many failures in spelling were recorded. The frequent recurrence of misspelt words in exercises other than the formal dictation and spelling tests has again been noticeable. If the great body of our scholars were to form the habit of reading more extensively than they now do, I am sure it would have a good effect on their spelling, for it will be found that with rare exceptions those who read most spell best.

*Arithmetic.*—Arithmetic has been steadily improving from year to year, and the results this year have been satisfactory on the whole. The importance of the subject itself, and the definiteness with which the progress of each individual can be tested by examination have secured for it the place of honour among the primary-school subjects. Teachers feel that in teaching arithmetic they must put forth their strongest efforts, for the popular verdict as to their ability to conduct a school will be largely influenced by the success or failure of their scholars in this subject. In thirty-seven schools the results ranged from good to excellent; in fourteen schools they were fairly good; and in the eight remaining schools they tailed off from moderate to positive failure. In several schools fingers were freely made use of for counting by children of the First and Second Standards. I was sorry to see this; I thought such a stupid and laborious habit would have been stamped out by this time; its appearance in a class is a sure sign of weak teaching.

*Composition and Grammar.*—Steady progress continues to be made in the teaching of composition, and the letters and short essays of the pupils are much improved. A good foundation in sentence-making is being laid in the Third Standard; and the pupils who are now passing up to the higher standards should not be open to the reproach of passing through the public-school course without acquiring sufficient skill to write an ordinary letter that will be clear in its meaning, and free from grammatical blunders. When grammar held a place among the pass-subjects the results were far from satisfactory in the majority of our schools. It is no better taught now, when it ranks as a class-subject; and in some schools I fear the kind of work shown indicated something approaching neglect in its treatment. As an intellectual exercise no other subject the children are called upon to deal with can compare with the grammar lesson; and I always regard good work done in grammar as sure evidence of skilful teaching. The best use of the analysis of sentences seems to me to be very often lost sight of. The scholars are generally asked to write out the analysis of a sentence or two on slates or on paper. The exercises are marked and corrections pointed out; and there the matter usually ends. But instead of making this a written exercise on almost every occasion, it should only rarely be so used. It should be the brightest and keenest of oral lessons—a kind of parsing lesson, not of words, but of clauses and phrases—and much ground should be covered in very little time. The pupils should then be encouraged to rebuild the sentences, or to model others after the pattern of those they have been taking to pieces. The analysis lesson would thus be brought into close connection with the composition lesson, with which, as it is now treated in many schools, it would appear to have nothing in common.

*Drawing.*—Drawing remains much about the same as last year. A great deal of the school time is spent over it, more perhaps than can be well spared from other subjects in the higher standards. The relief afforded to the girls of the Fourth and Sixth Standards by the excision of geometrical drawing from their course was much appreciated, but there was considerable disappointment when it was found that scale drawing was not wiped out from the work required from girls of the Fifth Standard. In nearly all the schools the children of Standards I., II., and III. were well grounded in the knowledge of geometrical forms prescribed for them; indeed, their head-work was much in advance of their hand-work.

*Geography.*—In Standard II. the children had usually a good knowledge of the meaning of a map and of the principal geographical terms. What they did best, however, was the pointing out of continents, oceans, and seas; and in the best-taught classes a short description of the position of the seas were readily added as the pointer travelled over the map from sea to sea. This descriptive accompaniment was in a good many instances carried into the work of Standard III. and the higher standards. If children are trained to use their maps well, and to interpret what they see, they will learn a great deal without a text-book. Map-drawing is not sufficiently practised by the children, and fewer teachers than one would expect show themselves expert in sketching maps on the blackboard in presence of their class, and filling in details as the lesson proceeds.

*History.*—In history the selected dates were almost always accurately known; indeed, it was the rule to find the dates well prepared even where the lessons themselves had little merit. It was hoped that the history lessons would have greatly improved when the choice of what he should teach from the prescribed periods was left to the teacher, and the number of lessons was limited to twenty-five. The improvement, if there has been any, has not been striking. It would appear also that, with the restricted course of lessons, there has been much less reading of history than before. There is a distinct loss here, for, whether the children were acquiring historical knowledge or not, they were at least getting additional practice in reading, which was a good thing in itself.

*Science and Object Lessons.*—The teachers have done their best to give their scholars some knowledge of elementary science. In a good many schools the character of the instruction has been worthy of commendation, and it may be said that in all the schools the pupils have acquired a good deal of useful information. Object-lessons of a kind have been given in all the lower classes. It is not easy to give a good object-lesson. A good many teachers forget this, and very often what passes for an object-lesson with them is so only in name. A certain amount of information is im-



parted to the children, and it is not unusual to find them able to express themselves well in answering questions on what they have learned. So far this is very good. But the main purpose of the lesson—the cultivation of the perceptive powers—is often entirely overlooked.

*Additional Subjects.*—Under the head of additional subjects are included recitation, disciplinary exercises and drill, singing, needlework, and knowledge of the subject matter of the reading-books. In thirty-eight schools the children were presented for examination in all these subjects; drill was omitted in eight schools, singing in seventeen schools, and needlework in nine schools. As there are so many small schools in our district, I think our teachers are to be congratulated on the efforts they have put forth to overtake the work entailed by attention to these subjects. It is laid down in the regulations that “any good work under this head done in small schools will be accepted as evidence of praiseworthy zeal and efficiency.” Very few of our schools have failed to give evidence of such good work.

The past year will long be memorable for its measles, mumps, and mud. Parents in this district take an intense interest in the examinations, and they were indulging in gloomy forecasts as to the condition in which the schools would be found. Teachers, too, had more than their usual anxiety about the fruits of their labours. Fortunately most of the school work had been overtaken before the epidemics swept over our districts, the examinations, however, taking place while matters were nearly at their worst. It speaks well for the thoroughness with which the foundations of the work had been laid in most of our schools that in spite of all disadvantages disaster was exceptional. Where disaster did come, I wish the chances of its recurrence were as little to be dreaded as a fresh outbreak of measles.

I have, &c.,

JAMES GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, South Canterbury.

### OTAGO.

SIR,—

We have the honour to submit the following report on the schools of the Otago District for the year 1893. During the year all the schools except two were examined, and nearly all were visited for inspection. The two that were not examined were closed during the last weeks of the year through the prevalence of illness among the pupils, and their examination was omitted at the request of the School Committee, and with the consent of the Chairman of the Board. The few schools that were not inspected were closed when the Inspector was visiting the district in which they are situated. The following table shows the chief statistics of examination for the year:—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes in Standards.	Average Age.
							Yrs. mos.
Infants ...	7,433	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard I. ...	2,775	102	39	109	2,525	91	9 0
" II. ...	2,837	138	71	130	2,498	88	10 2
" III. ...	2,895	125	94	479	2,197	76	11 3
" IV. ...	2,723	131	102	621	1,869	69	12 3
" V. ...	1,954	84	61	390	1,419	73	13 1
" VI. ...	1,241	30	24	87	1,100	89	14 1
Above Standard VI. ...	434	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	22,292	610	391	1,816	11,608	...	11 7·7*

\* Mean of average age.

There were presented for examination 22,292 pupils, of whom 14,425 were entered for examination in one or other of the standards. In all, 13,815 were present and were examined in the standards, and 11,608 passed the standard for which they were presented—in other words, 84 per cent. of the pupils examined in standards passed. This result is 1 per cent. below that for last year, but is as good as the percentage of passes in standards for any previous year; and it is a better result than we had ventured to expect, as the work of most of the schools was interrupted by an epidemic of measles that broke out shortly before the examinations were due, and gradually spread from Dunedin to the most remote rural districts.

The percentage of failures (the exceptions being omitted for this computation) was 14, a lower percentage than that of any previous year except 1892.

The average percentage of marks for class-subjects was 54; last year it was 58. The subjects of instruction grouped under this head are: Grammar (in three standards), geography (in two standards), history, and science and object lessons.

The average marks for additional subjects were 70, the total marks attainable under this head being 100.

Out of a total of 14,425 pupils, 610 were absent on the day of examination. This number is nearly double what it has been in recent years. The increase is no doubt entirely due to the prevalence of sickness shortly before the examinations were held, and we see no reason for thinking that it will continue. The number of exceptions has not increased.

On the whole, the examination results for the year, in spite of specially unfavourable circumstances, compare very favourably with those of last year and of previous years. In some

schools the teaching of the class-subjects has declined in efficiency, and in a few some of them have been greatly neglected; but in the great majority of the schools they have received a full share of attention. Should deliberate neglect of one or more of the class-subjects continue, it may become necessary, in the delinquent schools, to enforce a very strict standard in the pass-subjects, for it is obviously unfair to place teachers who neglect certain parts of the school course to concentrate attention on the pass-subjects on a level with those who pay just attention to every subject, and honestly carry out the entire scheme of instruction as laid down by the Minister.

We now offer a few comments on some of the more important subjects of instruction. In the majority of schools, and particularly in the larger ones, reading is usually fluent and accurate, and in a large proportion of them it is marked by intelligence and good expression. In the remainder, though fluency and accuracy are rarely very deficient, absence of natural expression is too prevalent. The teachers of these schools are, for the most part, fully aware of this serious defect, and many of them have taken great pains to remedy it, but with little success. In these cases failure is due not so much to methods as to government, for in no other subject does the teacher's inability to secure the hearty co-operation and ready effort of his pupils reveal itself so quickly or so surely as in reading. Quite in keeping with this is the wonderful transformation in the quality of the reading which is effected, even in a few months, when a teacher of strong governing capacity succeeds one feebly endowed with this gift. From the nature of the case, therefore, inferior reading will continue to be a characteristic of some of our schools; and the number of these will decrease only in proportion to the care taken in the making of appointments to weed out such teachers as have shown themselves wanting in governing capacity.

The inspection visits sometimes disclose a degree of slowness, hesitation, and difficulty in reading that must rob the exercise of anything like interest and pleasure, and make the ultimate attainment of satisfactory fluency and expression a severe and tedious task alike for pupils and teachers. It would be a distinct gain if the causes of this difficulty in dealing with new reading lessons could be laid bare, for those most concerned would then see how to remove them. In our judgment, one of the most potent is the want of a sufficiently extended course of easy and suitable reading in the lower classes, and particularly in the infant classes and in Standards I. and II. The pupils at these stages do not, as a rule, gain a sufficient mastery of the easy words that compose the vocabulary of the books they now read to enable them to readily recognise the same words in new settings and combinations. The remedy for this defect is obvious enough, and it can be easily applied in all schools except the smallest, and even in these without serious difficulty. A wider course of suitable and easy reading should be gone through by the classes below Standard III. In all schools a simple book might well be introduced between the Part II. Primer and the Infant Reader, and another between the Infant Reader and the No. I. Reading-book; and in the larger schools a third reading-book could be largely, if not wholly, overtaken in Standards I. and II. The extended practice of reading thus secured in the lower class would lead to a ready recognition of all the easier words in the higher books, and greatly promote ease and fluency at the higher stages of progress. The work of the infant classes not counting directly in the estimate of the results of the standard examination, teachers are tempted to give the reading of these classes much less attention than it should receive, and this is especially the case when examination time is drawing near. This temptation must be resisted; and, in fact, to yield to it is from every point of view very bad policy. The failure to ground the preparatory classes thoroughly in reading and counting always carries its own revenge, for it involves in the higher stages a laborious grind that disheartens the children and entirely deprives them of the stimulus of consciousness of power in dealing with their lessons. Of course, irregular attendance, and especially the frequently prolonged absence of pupils immediately after the examination, are responsible for some of the difficulty in reading which we are discussing; there is, however, little hope that this serious evil can be mitigated.

In a number of schools it is the custom to read on alternate days the No. I. or No. II. Graduated Reader and the supplementary reading-book corresponding to it. This procedure is open to very serious objection, for the supplementary readers are distinctly more difficult than the Graduated Readers with which they are bracketed, and ought not to be read until the easier books are thoroughly mastered. Later on a revision lesson, once a week or so, in the lower book would suffice to keep up a good knowledge of it. This is a matter we have often mentioned to teachers, but our hints have not always been attended to.

There seems to be a growing feeling among teachers that a better series of reading-books than that at present in use in the district could now be obtained. We think this is true, and that inquiry should be made with a view to the introduction of a better set of readers. It is generally admitted that the graduation of the lower Graduated Readers is far from perfect, and that many of the lessons in the series are less attractive and interesting than could be desired. If the Board should think of taking action in this matter, it would be well to give as long notice as possible of any changes that may be determined on, so that stocks of the books now in use might be disposed of without loss to the booksellers.

In our last report we noted with satisfaction the introduction of vertical writing in some of the schools. In the course of the year there has been a great deal of rash experimenting with this system of writing, which has been suddenly introduced in most of or in all the standard classes in a number of schools. As might be expected, the sudden change has not tended to improvement. Teachers would have acted more wisely had they begun the new style of writing in one or two of the lower classes, and left the higher ones to complete their training in the system to which they were accustomed. In connection with vertical writing, there is a tendency to fall into what is known as "back hand," a style of writing that looks bad and is not easy to read. On the whole, the teaching of writing is not so good as it was some years ago, before drawing made so great a demand on the pupils' time. We should be glad to see the amount of geometrical drawing now

prescribed for Standards IV., V., and VI. greatly curtailed. In this subject twelve problems should suffice for Standard IV., and the work of the two higher standards might, without disadvantage, be reduced in the same proportion. This would leave more time for the practice of freehand drawing, which we take to be of higher educative value, and also for writing. We feel bound to add that the writing of a large number of our schools suffers seriously from the careless scribbling that is allowed on slates and in exercise-books.

On the whole, arithmetic is now one of the best-taught subjects of the school course, though in many schools there is still much room for improvement in the setting out of the work. The time allowed for arithmetic is, in the larger schools, from an hour to an hour and a quarter, and in the smaller schools, about an hour and a half per day. In the latter case this is no doubt a large part of the school time, but in the circumstances of these schools probably not too much, for in them the pupils must necessarily spend a large part of their time at desk work, and the practice of arithmetic is a useful exercise of that kind, and one that is easily examined by the teacher. The amount of actual teaching in this subject which the several standards in such schools usually receive is less than an hour a week. Mental arithmetic receives a very fair share of attention and is often well known. Many teachers use the "Practical Mental Arithmetic" of Longman's series, a book of great merit which we should like to see carefully worked through in every school.

During the year there has been a sensible decline in the intelligence and thoroughness of the teaching of grammar. This is no doubt partly due to a misunderstanding of resolutions adopted by the Board and approved by the Minister. We regard elementary parsing and the general principles of analysis of sentences as one of the most truly educative studies in the entire course of instruction. This is the opinion of many of the best authorities on elementary education, including one so little likely to be swayed by partiality for technicalities as the late Matthew Arnold, who, it is well known, has repeatedly recorded his conviction that even simple exercises in grammar afford a far better test of intelligence than the exercises usually set in arithmetic. It is, however, quite true that grammar and analysis are commonly taught and expounded in text-books with too little regard to their relations to composition; and it is in this direction that improvement is needed. At the recent conference of Inspectors this subject was discussed, and a syllabus of instruction in grammar was suggested and recommended to the Minister, from which, should it be adopted, we believe much improvement in the handling of the subject will result. While the teaching of grammar has, on the whole, declined in efficiency, there are many schools in which it has been most thorough and successful, and has been carried out with considerable regard to its bearing on composition. In Standards III. and IV. there is still found a good deal of guess-work in distinguishing the parts of speech. This seems to arise from neglect to train the pupils first of all to thoroughly work out the meaning of the sentences from which the words to be parsed are taken. In Standard IV. the preparatory study of the sentence should, we think, be carried out to this extent: The statements contained in it should be distinguished, the connectives pointed out, and the person or thing spoken about in each statement and what is said about him or it indicated. This is really simple analysis without technical terms; but it can be readily done by pupils at this stage, and the experience of many of our teachers is that it gives a comprehension of the sentence and of the relation of the parts that greatly promotes accuracy and intelligence in dealing with the grammar exercise. It has the further advantage of familiarising the pupils with structure of sentences that contain two or more statements, and of enabling them to recognise where to begin and end their sentences, and how to connect the statements that compose them. This simple and untechnical analysis seems to us a point of great importance in the treatment of grammar in Standard IV. In the higher standards the treatment should be continued on the same lines but made more precise by the introduction of needful technical terms.

Fair progress continues to be made in the teaching of composition. In many of the exercises handed in during the past year there was, however, much less variety than we should like to find. From their remarkable uniformity we had, in some cases, reason to suspect that the exercises had been learned by rote, and that the children had very little power of writing down what they knew about a subject; but an independent test generally showed that this inference was not warranted, and that, on subjects in which there had been no previous practice, creditable exercises were composed by pupils who had used the same words and sentences in the exercise they had been taught. In many cases the subjects for composition continue to be chosen with little judgment and too exclusively from the lessons in the class reading-books. These lessons, no doubt, furnish a ready supply of matter, and afford scope for selection and abridgment; but for fostering originality of thought and construction they are vastly inferior to topics that come within the pupils' personal knowledge and experience. In the Sixth Reader there occurs a short lesson on "conversation," consisting of brief counsels written by Sir Matthew Hale for the use of his children. This lesson is very commonly set as the subject of a composition exercise, but a moment's reflection should show that the topic is too abstract for children to handle with any freedom or originality, and demands maturity of mind and powers of reflection that are quite beyond the years of the ordinary schoolboy. This may stand as a fair sample of the rather numerous unsuitable subjects on which children are invited to write. Greatly superior to these for the purpose in view are topics that interest young people, their games and amusements, their leisure employments, the employments of grown-up people with which they are familiar, and other subjects that appeal to their curiosity and fall within the range of their personal observation and knowledge, and to such topics we hope to see a more prominent place assigned in future programmes of composition work.

The only other subjects to which we need refer are object-lessons and science. Both of these receive a considerable share of attention, though there are not many teachers who take them up with hearty interest or enthusiasm. On the whole a good deal of useful information is gained from object-lessons, but, if we may generalise from the small number of them which we see given in the course of a year, they seldom possess much merit in other directions. They do not foster, to the degree that might be expected, the power of observing, describing, and reasoning in a

simple way about the objects that form the subject of study. With somewhat large classes a training of this kind is obviously not very easy to secure, but we do not think there should be any difficulty in reaching a higher measure of success than is generally attained. The lessons are commonly treated mainly as a means of imparting information, the training in observation, comparison, and description of what might be learned by adequate examination of the object entering but slightly into the teacher's design. The existence of this defect is admitted readily enough by many teachers, who allege that they have not sufficient facilities for making the lessons truly objective. Without denying that there is some force in this plea, we hold that if teachers took more interest in these lessons, and were more discreet in their choice of subjects, they could readily find sufficient means of illustrating them, and of making their treatment at once more interesting and more educative. To do this doubtless involves some trouble, but this will not baulk any teacher who is really anxious to improve and interest his pupils. "Milk and its Products" is a subject on which a lesson is given almost every year in many schools, but a glass of milk is the only aid to objective study which we have seen provided. In rural districts cream, curd, whey, cheese, and rennet could all be shown and examined if foresight were exercised and a little trouble taken. And the exhibition of a specimen of these materials would obviously add very greatly to the possible educative quality of the lesson. We often examine, or hear teachers examine, on such a subject as "lead," but a piece of the metal and a common article or two made of it are to be found only in the larger schools, and not always in these. Yet there are few districts in which a bit of sheet lead, a bullet or some grains of shot, a piece of lead piping, and some solder, or some of these, could not be got without much trouble. If object-lessons are to take their due place in the process of education, it is imperative that suitable objects in some variety should be provided for their illustration; without this aid they must remain on the lower level of information lessons. Were it customary to announce at the close of an object-lesson the subject of the next one, some of the pupils would no doubt be able to contribute some objects or pictures in illustration of the lesson, and these might be left with the teacher to form a collection of illustrative material for the benefit of the school.

For lessons in natural history and in manufactures good pictures of suitable size are very necessary. Limited sets of pictures of animals have been supplied to numbers of the larger schools, and others have been occasionally provided by the School Committees, but much remains to be done in providing suitable pictorial illustrations in connection with these subjects.

As we have pointed out in former reports, the treatment of object-lessons is often marred by the introduction of unnecessary technical names and a too minute and tedious enumeration of technical processes. A full knowledge of the subject treated of is no doubt necessary for the teacher, but common-sense should guide him in selecting from his stores of knowledge only what is important or likely to benefit and interest his pupils.

The present arrangements for teaching science do not work out so satisfactorily as we could wish. Some teachers have not yet drawn up a three years' course of instruction in the subject, as the regulations of 1891 require; and even when drawn up, the course is often only partly overtaken. On the other hand, the frequent changes of teachers involve changes in the course of study that greatly interfere with the continuity and the efficiency of the teaching. In schools that are affected by changes of teachers—and all are more or less subject to this evil—it would undoubtedly be a great advantage if the science courses were somewhat explicitly prescribed and defined, for then a new teacher could take up the work at the point at which his predecessor left it, and both would work on much the same lines. At present there is no guarantee that this will happen. Each teacher is free to make his own arrangements, and these are as likely to conflict as to accord with those of his predecessor. Something like uniformity of scope and aim in lessons in the same subject—physiology and health of the body, for example—is so desirable that it should be secured somehow. We had hoped that the Teachers' Institute, or its branches, would have considered the question of sketching out suitable courses of lessons in science, but, so far as we know, nothing has been done in this direction. In these circumstances, we think the Board might fitly interpose and make arrangements for securing a reasonable uniformity in the course of instruction in science. If four or five courses, each providing a minimum of work in one subject for a year, were sketched out, teachers would enjoy liberty enough if they were allowed to choose the three courses they would take up, and determine the order in which these should follow each other. Few, we feel sure, would object to have the minimum of matter included in a year's course explicitly indicated for their convenience and guidance, and many would be very thankful for such direction.

In a number of the larger schools very satisfactory work is done in the science subjects taken up. In these the head masters or senior assistants have entered into the subject with commendable enthusiasm, and have taken great pains to make the teaching as experimental and illustrative as they can. In most schools, however, the science subjects are but moderately handled, while in some they have been greatly neglected, and the teaching is almost worthless. We do not look for any great improvement while circumstances remain as they are. The want of simple text-books fit to be put into the pupils' hands, and the scanty equipment of knowledge, sometimes of the facts, oftener of the methods of science, on the part of not a few teachers, must, we fear, make the teaching of science comparatively unfruitful for years to come.

In rural schools the elements of agriculture are very generally taught as the sole science subject. A good deal of useful knowledge is no doubt gained from these lessons, but their treatment very seldom possesses any value as a mental training. The text-book commonly used, and often found in the hands of the pupils, contains a very large amount of chemical matter that can never be assimilated or understood without a course of simple experiments which there is no means of giving. It would be a distinct gain if this part of the course were but slightly touched on, and more attention were bestowed on topics that can be easily illustrated, or with which children in a farming district are more or less familiar. We know of no text-book very well suited to the needs of the pupils of our schools, but we can recommend as a book of reference for teachers the excellent

“Elements of Agriculture,” prepared by Dr. Fream, and published under the auspices of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. For its size it is wonderfully cheap, and it contains an admirable series of drawings of plants of economic value, as well as of most of the weeds, insect-pests, &c., with which the farmers of the future should be made familiar. It is not, however, a work in any way suitable for school children, though lads who are leaving school for farming pursuits would find it of the greatest use for their future calling.

Owing to a delay of a few weeks in beginning the usual examinations of the public schools of the district, we were not able to overtake the examination of the higher work of the district high schools, on which we are therefore unable to present a special report as in previous years.

We have, &c.,

D. PETRIE,  
W. TAYLOR, } Inspectors.  
P. GOYEN, }

The Secretary, Education Board, Otago.

### SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 12th March, 1894.

We have the honour to submit our annual report for the year ended 31st December, 1893. In view of probable changes in the syllabus of examination we do not venture to indicate fresh lines of procedure for the coming year, nor can we safely generalise to any great extent on the data afforded by the results of the past year, these having been rendered uncertain by the measles epidemic as a disturbing factor. Our notes will accordingly be very brief.

All the schools were inspected except four, which we found closed on account of sickness; all were also examined, twelve of them, indeed, twice. The purpose of this last step was to transfer the entire work of examination to the latter part of the year. By this arrangement five or six clear months will intervene between the Christmas holidays and the annual examinations. The earlier part of the year will be given to inspection and to the other work appertaining to the Inspector's department.

Referring in few words to the work being done in the schools, we note the continued improvement in the management of infant classes and departments. The grants made from time to time by the Board for the better equipment of these have thus been fully justified.

In the standard classes, however, we have seen but little indication of improvement on the work of last year. Indeed, ground then gained has, we fear, in some instances been lost. Flows and ebbs of mental energy are not peculiar to the teaching profession, so that a backward tendency on the part of some teachers, though matter for regret, is hardly matter for surprise. The intellectual lethargy here hinted at betrays itself in various ways. For example, there are in some of our schools teachers who attempt to teach arithmetic by plying their pupils with an endless series of test cards, all heedless of the fact that an intelligent mastery of a single principle is worth a host of mere details. In the science lessons, again, this mental sloth becomes still more apparent. Here suitable specimens and apparatus are so often completely wanting that the instruction is, in many schools, in danger of becoming entirely futile. True, these indispensable adjuncts are found in a considerable number of schools; equally true, however, they are totally absent from the great majority. This reproach could be taken away in most cases by but little effort on the teacher's part; the homeliest collection and the rudest apparatus are by no means the least effective. Another example of the disposition to which we are referring is furnished by geography. The physical part of this subject, though perhaps the most entertaining branch of the primary-school course, has been kept steadily out of view by too many teachers. This is all the more surprising when it is remembered that this branch is not only of great practical importance but also carries the pupils' minds far beyond the limits of the class-room, feasting their imaginations with richly-coloured pictures from nature's matchless gallery.

From the minor we pass for the moment to the major key. A large number of the Board's teachers are doing yeoman service, increasing year by year their practical skill and moral influence. A power for good not only in their own, but also in adjacent schools, such may truly be called the salt of the teaching profession.

The summary of the results for the whole district shows that in the year to which this report refers a relatively smaller number of pupils passed in the standard classes than in the previous year, and also that the marks awarded for class and additional subjects are somewhat lower. On the other hand, it shows that the average age of passing the various standards by the pupils is lower by two months in 1893 than in 1892.

As compared with the year 1892 a smaller number of pupils over eight years of age was withheld from examination in Standard I. In nearly every instance where pupils were so withheld the teacher furnished a satisfactory excuse.

Appended is the usual summary of results for each school. [Not reprinted.]

We are, &c.,

JAMES HENDRY, } Inspectors.  
GEO. D. BRAIK, }

The Secretary, Education Board, Invercargill.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	116	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	502	17	27	102	356	14 0
" V. ...	746	48	41	240	417	13 2
" IV. ...	1,191	74	97	388	632	12 3
" III. ...	1,406	104	107	369	826	11 3
" II. ...	1,378	75	87	91	1,175	10 1
" I. ...	1,238	71	32	90	1,045	8 11
Preparatory ...	3,119	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	9,696	389	341	1,280	4,451	11 7*

\* Mean of average age.

*Approximate Cost of Paper.*—Preparation, not given; printing (2,950 copies), £27 16s.

By Authority: SAMUEL COSTALL, Government Printer, Wellington.—1894.

Price 9d.]