REPORT ON GISBORNE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL (JUNIOR DIVISION).

Master in Charge : Mr. E. W. Mann, B.A.

Syllabus of Instruction.—Arithmetic : General. Algebra : Hamblin Smith's, to simple quadratics. Euclid : Book I., with easy exercises. English : (*a*) Shakespeare's " Macbeth "—general knowledge of play, identification of extracts, description of scenes, character, paraphrasing ; (*b*) Coleridge's " Ancient Mariner " ; (*c*) Milton's " Paradise Lost." Science : Elementary mechanics, Stage I. French : Macmillan's First French ; French Class-book, pages 1–64 and 94–97. Latin : Principia, Part I., exercises 1–53 ; grammar and vocabulary ; gradatim exercises, 1–100.

All the pupils in the upper division enter for matriculation. The fourteen candidates in the lower division are of unequal merit, and several of them are comparatively weak. The first five candidates have sent in good average papers, and much of their work—notably in arithmetic and algebra—is of a high order of merit. The average marks obtained by the whole division in arithmetic and Euclid are somewhat lower than in previous years. In Euclid the definitions were imperfectly known and understood, and not a single attempt was made to answer the simple exercise No. 9. Ten out of fifteen questions set were taken to represent full marks in arithmetic, but some of the candidates did very poorly in this subject. The English papers were fairly done, but the pupils did not express themselves with the freedom shown by last year's pupils in questions where the pupil's own individuality was required. Science shows very fair preparation. There were no papers really poor, and the majority varied between very fair and good. In Latin and French the same remarks are applicable. The easier portions of the grammar are known, but there is a weakness in the verbs, and the translation in some instances may be described as " free " rather than " literal." In spite of these defects, however, the progress for a first-year course may be set down as good, and above the average usually reached by first-year pupils. The papers generally are neatly done, but some of the writing is very difficult to read, and needs more careful attention. Altogether the results give evidence of a year's good progress, and the first five candidates deserve special credit for the satisfactory character of all their papers.

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

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,— Blenheim, 30th March, 1899.

I have the honour to present the report of the Marlborough Education Board for the year ended the 31st December, 1898.

The Board at the beginning of the year consisted of the following persons : The Hon. W. D. H. Baillie, M.L.C., Thomas Carter, John Clervaux Chaytor, John Duncan, Richard McCallum, C. H. Mills, M.H.R., Joseph Henry Redwood, Arthur Penrose Seymour, and Harry Fleetwood Thompson. Owing to a misunderstanding, no nominations were received from the Committees for the election of three members in place of those retiring by rotation at the end of March. The Board therefore, in accordance with section 13, subsection (8), of " The Education Act, 1877," elected the retiring members Twelve meetings of the Board were held during the year, the average attendance of members being 6·16.

SCHOOLS.—Sixty-five schools have been in operation during the year. Three of these were temporarily closed before the end of the year, the number returned as open during the last quarter being sixty-two. Of these, only eighteen had an average attendance of twenty-five and upwards, and as many as thirty-eight were schools with less than fifteen scholars in average attendance. The large proportion of small aided schools in the district has been repeatedly referred to in former reports, and it has been again and again pointed out how heavily the district is handicapped by the circumstance, and as frequently appeals have been made to the Minister for some consideration on this account. In the twenty-first annual report, page vi., Table J, may be found the most convincing evidence of the unique and exceptional difficulties under which the district labours in consequence of the necessity for supporting so many small schools From the table quoted it will be seen that the mean average attendance per school in Marlborough is 29·9, by far the lowest in New Zealand, the next lowest (Westland) having 38·3, while, with the exception of Auckland, Marlborough shows the largest number of schools having under fifteen pupils ; but in that district there were forty-four such schools out of 338, while here there were thirty-six out of sixty-one. In other words, 13 per cent. of the Auckland schools and 59 per cent. of the Marlborough schools are of this kind. But still plainer proofs of the disabilities under which this district suffers will be found in every page of the Minister's report, Table No. 8. It will be found that, as a rule, schools having a lower average attendance than fifty cause a loss to the Boards ; that is, the cost of salaries and maintenance (exclusive of building and extensive repairs) exceeds the amount of the capitation earned. Now, in Marlborough there are only nine schools having an average attendance of fifty or upwards, and four of these actually cost more than they receive from capitation. Taking the figures given in the Minister's report for 1897 (page vi.), the schools in each district having more than fifty pupils can be expressed as a percentage of the total number of schools as follows, the districts being set down in the order of their magnitude, as shown by the number of schools : Auckland, 27 per cent. ; Otago, 40 per cent. ; North Canterbury, 38 per cent. ; Southland, 29 per cent. ; Wellington, 36·6 per cent. ; Wanganui, 39 per cent. ; Nelson, 25 per cent. ; Hawke's Bay, 44 per cent. ; South Canterbury, 32 per cent. ; Marlborough, 16 per cent. ; Taranaki, 25 per cent. ; Westland, 18 per cent. ; Grey, 27 per cent. In the Marlborough District, of the twenty largest schools there are only seven that earn more than they receive. The total profit on these schools is £765 10s., and the loss on the remaining thirteen amounts to £270 9s., so that the net amount of receipts over expenditure in these twenty schools is £495. This is the entire fund out of which the unavoidable loss on the remaining forty-five small