

women in the factories, but what is to be said in the case of the "milking-children," whose life of toil is unapproached by any form of factory employment within my knowledge? And yet this picture, though a sad one, might be productive of great good even to the children themselves if placed under proper control. Employment, directive and useful, is the need of our colonial youth. To make a life beautiful in itself right conduct and employment should be inculcated as necessary attributes to a successful and honourable career. The most successful men have been those who have toiled hardest in the fields of duty. The suggestions made by me last year in the matter of technical education would direct this abuse of "child labour" into proper channels. Milking cows is a branch of technical education that might be productive of the very best results to the children and the country. Government inspectors of butter- and cheese-factories are common. Why cannot their services be utilised for technical training in the case of these children, so that when they become men and women they may possess a practical and technical knowledge about butter and cheese, of the highest value to them? Such children, taught in the schools to read, write, and do arithmetic well, could readily dispense, if parents so desired, with those adjuncts such as history, grammar, and geography, which can be learned in after-years without the help of the schoolmaster. I have no wish whatever to see children limited either in the acquisition of knowledge or in the milking of cows, but the system I have described is little better than a species of modern slavery, and is the outcome in a large measure of our present system of standards. It is not the parents or the teachers who are at fault, but rather our defective system of departmental organization, and which is bringing about so much harm to our growing youth, both mentally and morally.

In the work of the schools defects in class preparation are not as common as formerly. As to class and optional subjects there is little to be said that is new. Few schools omit to take up even the latter subjects. This year my history, grammar, and mental arithmetic tests were more searching than formerly, and sometimes the results, particularly in grammar, were disappointing; but I do not anticipate weakness in this direction another year. On the whole, however, I am satisfied with much of the work that is done. It is honest and earnest, and often capable; and, though defects do appear now and then, it is the outcome of two many subjects rather than carelessness or neglect.

School discipline, which includes military drill for boys and calisthenics for girls, is making fair headway, and all the large schools may be set down as satisfactory. The country pupils often lack the precision that one finds in the larger schools. The physique is there, but the soldier-like bearing is absent. Still, the moral influence exercised by the teachers in the country is perhaps more pronounced than in the towns. "Saluting the flag" has become an institution in the Napier schools. It is an effective incident which no doubt brings up feelings of patriotism among the pupils. The plan has not been initiated in any other school district.

The old plan of teaching sewing in the schools is to be discontinued, and I am glad of it. Many of the lady teachers spent hours every week working overtime preparing and fixing work for the sewing-lessons. The amended programme lacks one or two matters of importance, but, altogether, it is a syllabus that is likely to be approved by the lady teachers who give instruction in this subject. In future, no annual examination of finished specimens will be necessary.

The establishment of a training-school for ex-pupil-teachers is an event of great moment to the district, but remarks upon it may well be deferred until experience has proved its utility. In conclusion, I would like to say of the teachers that they work with diligence and often with commendable success, and now that all the schools are placed under the government of separate Committees I look forward to the manifestation of much greater activity in school matters throughout the district during the coming year.

I have, &c.,

H. HILL,

Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Blenheim, 25th January, 1899.

I have the honour to present my eighth annual report on the primary schools of the District of Marlborough.

At the end of the year 1897 the number of schools under the control of your Board was sixty-four. Six of these were permanently closed at the end of the year. Six new schools were opened during the year 1898, and two were temporarily closed during the last quarter of that year. All these are small aided schools; and it would seem that the number of such schools in this district has nearly reached the upward limit, for though doubtless some new ones will be required, the earlier established household schools will soon begin to drop out when the children have passed through the several standards.

The total number of scholars returned as on the rolls for the last quarter of 1898 was 2,121. The number on the examination schedules was 2,135, the discrepancy arising from the fact that a number of schools were examined during the currency of the third quarter of the year.

By the regulations, the teachers are required to explain the non-presentation in Standard I. of all children above eight years of age. The number of such children was 131 out of 615 in the preparatory class, or 19.6 per cent.—slightly less than the proportion in 1897. The reasons given for their retention in the preparatory class were: Late entrance, 52; irregular attendance, 26; dull or weak intellect, 18; ill-health or delicate, 12; no reason given, 21; frequent change of schools, 1; truant-player, 1. Under the head of "no reason" are included such explanations (?) as "not fit for