

In a few of the country schools a bad unnatural tone is common in reading ; while in a few others a most remarkable and peculiar emphasis is laid upon the last word of a sentence, which sounds ludicrous. I have striven zealously against all such peculiarities, and I hope not wholly in vain. I have been pleased in observing that a marked improvement in most of the schools has taken place during the year in writing, both in the form and manner of writing, as well as in its correctness from dictation. It is highly gratifying to notice how rapidly and correctly many of the boys and girls generally perform their arithmetic, a fair proportion of which is done also in the higher rules.

OTHER STUDIES.

Geography and use of the maps, grammar, British history, English composition, book-keeping, geometry, algebra, drawing and mapping, and also sewing and needlework, plain and ornamental, are all more or less taught, the first five in nearly all the schools. A large number of the scholars are now well acquainted with geography and the maps ; and not a few have a very fair knowledge of grammar. Geometry, book-keeping, drawing, and mapping are taught in the town boys' schools ; and algebra and Latin are also among the duties of the senior class in the Napier Boys' Trust School. English composition, in short essays on simple subjects and in letters, is now generally attended to by the older scholars in the larger schools. The art of sewing and needlework, both plain and ornamental, is also commonly taught in the afternoons to the girls.

OF ORDER IN SCHOOL, USE OF THE BLACK-BOARD, PROPER PLACE FOR WALL MAPS, AND EMPLOYMENT OF THE JUNIOR CLASS.

I should scarcely be performing my duty if I did not once more (as I did a few years ago) prominently bring these matters to notice, in hopes of our teachers and their schools profiting thereby. In two or three of our schools there is still a sad want of order and quietness in the school ; the scholars seem to have been allowed to do pretty much as they pleased, while the noise when all are learning (?) their lessons together (often repeating them at the very top of their voices) is discordant and stunning ; while a little more order in their manner of leaving the school would not be wholly unserviceable. Again, the benefit of allowing the poor little junior class to sit for hours during the day unemployed—save when, for a brief time, engaged in reading their short lesson—is to me beyond comprehension. I have repeatedly pointed out how those little ones should be profitably employed, as, indeed, they are in a very large majority of our schools. In a few of our schools (and, I am happy to say, but a very few), that valuable auxiliary the black-board is too often consigned to a corner, instead of being daily and constantly in use, to the steady advantage of the scholars, and to the lessening the labours of the teacher ; while the large and useful wall maps also are, in a few cases, removed from their proper place on the walls and shoved into a corner.

INSPECTION.

During the year I have visited all the Government-aided schools in the provincial district twice or oftener, save that at the Wairoa. More days have been occupied this year in travelling and in inspecting schools than in any former one.

I have been led to make the several general remarks I have on what I cannot but deem wanting and even reprovable in a few of our schools, in, I trust, a kindly spirit ; for I should be very sorry if hereafter it should be remarked that I had overlooked all such matters.

OF SCHOOL PRIZES.

Under this head I would just observe that I am sure both scholars and teachers are thankful to the late Provincial Council of Hawke's Bay for its liberal grant of a few pounds for this purpose, which has been advantageously used. Not a small amount of diligence and improvement on the part of the scholars is to be fairly ascribed to this, and I sincerely hope the Education Board will be pleased to afford a similar grant.

CONCLUSION.

It will be seen from the tables that an increase to nearly all the schools has been made during the year, notwithstanding several of the elder scholars, both male and female, who were at many if not all of the schools at the commencement of the year, have left school to enter on active life.

In nearly all the schools there is much greater activity and diligence exhibited among the scholars in applying themselves to learning than there was formerly, and where such is not the case (which is, however, rare) it is mainly the fault of the parents, or teachers, or both. Indeed, my conviction is, as I stated four years ago in my report, that "the scholars are, on the whole, far in advance of a similar number of children in the Old Country, taken promiscuously, in capacity and in desire of learning."

During the year a few poor children of both sexes have been admitted into some of the town and country schools free, on an Inspector's order, but in no case without previous strict inquiry as to the ability of their parents, &c. Notwithstanding, I regret to say, there are still several children in the neighbourhood of schools, both in town and country, who are growing up without scholastic education mainly owing to the thoughtlessness of their parents.

I have already mentioned the great irregularity of attendance on the part of the scholars, which is, I believe, in nineteen cases out of twenty, not the fault of the scholar but of the parents, who not only keep the child at home for trifling matters, but also, not unfrequently in country places, just to save a few pence ; as, for instance, when it rains on a Monday, then the child is almost sure to be kept at home for the remainder of that week, because the parents will not pay the week's charge, small though it be, for a single day short of the full week ; and so the poor child suffers.

For my own part—now that the provincial system of government has been abolished—I heartily wish that the Colonial Government will, at this approaching session, pass an Act containing a suitable comprehensive plan of general education : one by which education shall be open for all alike, both