

Table No. II.

Too young for Standard I.	Preparing for Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.	Total.
647	717	536	463	238	69	Nil	2,697

From the first table the actual condition of education is seen in the district schools at the date of my examinations from September to December, 1879; and from the second table, the probable number who will be presented for examination in the standards next year.

Compared as percentages the following results are obtained:—

1. That according to Table I., which gives the result of my examination, more than 52 per cent. of the children attending the district schools were not capable at the close of the year of being presented in Standard I.:—19·1 per cent. passed in Standard I.; 17·4 per cent. passed in Standard II.; 8·4 per cent. passed in Standard III.; 2·9 per cent. passed in Standard IV.; and none in Standard V. or VI.

2. That according to Table II., which accounts for all the children attending the district schools in December, 1879, 52 per cent. are below Standard I., of whom 26·5 per cent. are preparing for it; 19·8 per cent. are preparing for Standard II.; 17·2 per cent. are preparing for Standard III.; 8·9 per cent. are preparing for Standard IV.; 2·5 per cent. are preparing for Standard V.; and none for Standard VI.

Although these figures show the results of education in this district to be far from satisfactory, they do not show the actual state of affairs until compared with the ages of the children attending the schools. In Table No. IV., to which reference has already been made, the ages of the children are thus stated: Under five, 218; between five and seven, 612; between seven and ten, 907; between ten and thirteen, 712; between thirteen and fifteen, 214; fifteen years, 34: total, 2,697—or 30·6 per cent. of children below seven years of age; 33·5 per cent. of children between seven and ten years of age; 26·6 per cent. of children between ten and thirteen years of age; 7·9 per cent. of children between thirteen and fifteen years of age; 1·3 per cent. of children over fifteen years of age.

Now, if we consider that children at seven years of age ought to be capable of being presented in Standard I., it will be found that in the district schools of Hawke's Bay there are 22 per cent. more children below Standard I. than ought to be there; 14 per cent. of whom ought to be distributed in Standards I. to IV., and 8 per cent. in Standards V. and VI. This state of affairs is far from encouraging, and it shows what has to be done in this district to bring up the education to the requirements of the Old Country, where the difficulties of school attendance are much greater than here. I do not fear but that the teachers in the district will strive to cope with this low state of education, now they know it to exist, and as the conditions have so much altered in their favour. The difficulties of school accommodation and appliances have in the greater number of instances become things of the past, and it rests with the teachers themselves whether their schools continue to show such low results or not. A great change must come over the working of some of the teachers. Instead of entering the schools without knowing what the lessons of the day have to be, it will be necessary for them to prepare the work beforehand. No lesson to be given in the school should be left unprepared by the teacher; but, to judge from some of the answers given by the children on the days of examination, one is inclined to question whether many of the teachers ever think of their children and the lessons they have to teach from the time of closing in the afternoon till the opening on the following day. I must express the pleasure I felt during my examinations at Woodville, Danevirke, Gisborne, and Wairoa Schools, when the teachers brought to me notes of the lessons that had been given in one or more of the extra subjects; but I should have been more pleased had notes been handed to me on the various subjects required for the standard examinations, as they are certainly as important, and require quite as much preparation to teach well, as any of the extra subjects.

I now proceed to deal specially with the work of the teachers. Among the various subjects examined by me, those required for passing the standard examination naturally claim first attention.

READING.—This subject, like most of those examined, is taught with some degree of success, but the great failing of too many of the teachers is in permitting children to pass too rapidly from one book to another. There are books to read and books to learn, and both are good in their way. I have found children who could not write a single letter or put down a figure on a slate, read, or pretend to do so, from No. V. Royal Reader. That the children knew nothing of what they read is certain from replies given by them in response to my questions; but this is only one of many instances where the teachers forego their own notions of teaching in order to please foolish and over-anxious parents. So that "John" and "Jane" can gabble through a book, what matters it whether it is understood or not? "The master knows nothing of his business if John and Jane are not immediately drafted into a higher class!" I hope the teachers whose children pretend to read out of Royal Readers Nos. III. and IV., and yet can barely pass the requirements of Standard I., will take this kindly warning, for they only are responsible when the examination comes round, and they only are to blame if they allow outsiders to intrude into their work, which should be sacred to teachers who know anything of their profession.

DICTATION AND SPELLING.—These subjects are subsidiary to reading, and should be looked upon as such by teachers. In the Napier, Gisborne, Havelock, Taradale, and Kaikora District Schools, they are systematically taught with marked success. It appears to be forgotten for what purposes dictation and spelling should be employed. A new word cannot have been acquired until the learner is able to spell and write it down correctly. To spell it correctly shows the power of distinguishing the printed word, but to write it correctly shows that the eye has also learnt to distinguish the word in its script form. In numberless instances children can distinguish the words in their printed form and yet they are unable to write them correctly in script; hence the value of spelling and dictation lessons