

forming any final conclusion from a perusal of the list of passes alone, without also taking into account my short estimate of the state of each school. The proportion that the scholars present bear to the number of those brought forward for standards ought also to be considered. The kind of standard passed, and the average age at which each standard has been passed, are also important elements in determining the real status of each school. By way of assisting the public to form an opinion as to this latter matter, I have compiled a table showing the average age at which each standard has been passed in every school. This is well worth doing, for once at least. From the results given by this table, which correspond, I find, pretty closely with those obtained by me this year in the adjoining District of Marlborough, and with those published in other school districts in this colony, it appears that the average age at which scholars pass the several standards is as follows: Standard I., 8 years 2 months; II., 9 years 10 months; III., 11 years; IV., 12 years 2 months; V., 13 years 7 months; VI., 14 years 3 months. The large detailed table seems to show that nothing is gained by passing children through the First Standard at an unusually early age, as by the time they have reached the Fourth Standard they are barely on an equality with those who went through the earlier stage when they were a year older. I trust also that the example of a few precocious children who have passed the Fifth and Sixth Standards a year or two sooner than their fellows will not stimulate injudicious parents and teachers to attempt to rival, by sheer cramming, the success of those whom Nature has endowed with exceptional abilities. As a rule, the scholar who passes the Sixth Standard in his fifteenth year has done very well; and I regard with extreme disfavour any attempt to push scholars through much before that age. It will be observed that several of the smaller schools have passed 100 per cent. of those presented, generally in the earlier standards. This of itself may mean very little, and ought not to lead to unfair comparisons with older and larger schools, where the percentage is smaller. It may be laid down, however, on the other hand, as a general rule, that where the percentage of passes falls below 65, as is the case this year in eleven of our schools, some very satisfactory reason—such as irregularity of attendance, or frequent change of teachers—should be shown. If passes are to be accepted as tests of work done, no school that cannot show 75 per cent. of passes, out of at least two-thirds of the number present on examination day, can be said to have done well.

SUPPLY AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS.—At present, so far as the means go of filling up the frequently-recurring vacancies in our schools, or of providing, in anything like a systematic manner, for the training of young teachers in school-work, the Nelson District is but in sorry case. A training college, with the scanty means at the disposal of the Board, however desirable, is not to be thought of. The annual examinations of teachers, judging from two years' experience, do little or nothing towards filling up the gaps caused by resignations or other causes. Last year not a single new candidate in Nelson succeeded in obtaining a certificate, while three only of the fourteen candidates for the approaching examinations are not already on the Nelson list of teachers, the rest coming forward merely to complete their certificates or to obtain a higher grade. Vacancies are now filled up—often after a long delay from the lack of any decently-qualified candidate—on the strength of a comparatively easy examination, conducted quarterly (and avowedly as a makeshift) by a Board of Examiners, consisting of three members of the Education Board and the Inspector. The candidates are usually either young women who have received most, if not all, of their education at our primary schools; or men, some of them middle-aged, who have had no experience whatever in teaching, and whose qualifications for their important office are respectability, and the fact that in boyhood they received a fair commercial education. Little argument is needed to show how slow, how costly, and, above all, how uncertain is this method of getting teachers; for some time must elapse before it is discovered that the master who is thus learning his business at the public expense may, after all, have no real aptitude for an occupation often taken up merely because no other employment is open at the time. But it is waste of words to enlarge on the manifold defects of a system that is admittedly unsatisfactory, and for the longer retention of which necessity is the only plea. I purpose sketching out a plan that will do something, at least, towards supplying Nelson with young teachers of both sexes, with respect to whom, before they are finally taken into the service of the Board, three things, at any rate, will have been ascertained: 1st. That they are competent from a literary point of view; 2nd. That they have some knowledge of school-work; 3rd. That they have some aptitude for the business of teaching. I may premise that I am aware that the members of the Board are entirely opposed to the pupil-teacher system, as worked in this colony and in Australia. Without sharing these objections myself to their full extent, I do not entertain a very warm feeling in favour of a system which has been deliberately rejected in two countries which, in matters of education, stand in the foremost rank—Prussia and the United States. What I propose is such a modification of the pupil-teacher system as seems to me suitable to the present circumstances of this district. I would select the most promising boys and girls who have attended, or who still attend, our primary schools, and who show a desire to make teaching their future occupation. The conditions as to age and proficiency should be that they have attained their sixteenth year, and that they have passed, with ease, the Sixth Standard. These, to borrow a word from the Auckland Inspector (to whom also the original idea of my plan is due) might be called *probationers*. They should be placed, as vacancies occur, under our most trusty and experienced teachers, to learn the practical work of a school. Their term of service or trial should be not less than three years, at the expiration of which they might fairly be expected to go up for examination for the E certificate. In the meantime no attempt should be made to vex their souls with examinations of any kind, so that there would be no likelihood of their health breaking down under the cruel double strain of teaching and examination. If they have any real energy or ability they might well prepare themselves, with but slight extraneous help, for the teachers' examination, the last, I should hope, that they would feel called on to undertake for some years. A small bonus should be given annually to the head-teacher, on an Inspector's certificate that the progress of the probationers in the art of teaching had been satisfactory. The parents of the probationers ought also to enter into a bond by which they undertook to forfeit a certain sum if their children left the service of the Board, without leave, within two years after the expiration of their three years' trial. The salaries offered, especially for the first year, need not be large—certainly not