

undergo every day in any well-conducted school, then the fault lies in his own incapacity. The brain of such a scholar will not be strengthened, but actually weakened, by the additional strain put upon it. To me a little school-girl, returning home laden with a pile of books to be pored over when she ought to be in bed, is a sorry sight. The notion that wisdom, or even book-learning—a very different thing—can be increased by trying to pour something more into a vessel that is already full, is one of the most mischievous superstitions of the nineteenth century.”—(*Mr. Hodgson.*) “Statements are sometimes made to the effect that pupils in the public schools have far too much to do, and that the mental work required of them is insidiously undermining their physique. Such statements are, I believe, wholly devoid of foundation. The pupils are, as a rule, remarkably rosy and robust. Even in the largest schools, where a great many pairs of lungs are couped up within the walls of a moderate-sized room, the general healthy appearance of the children is very striking. The school hours rarely exceed five. Add to this an hour and a half of home study, and the total time pupils devote to their education is by no means excessive. In most schools on the Continent of Europe the more advanced pupils are in the school-room for as many hours as the total of school and home work here amounts to. If there is scope for play and games, the school children of Otago have abundance of time to devote to them. If in some cases the physique of public school pupils is not what it might be, I believe that other causes than the time and attention given to their education can be readily assigned.”—(*Mr. Petrie.*) “The regulation directs the Inspector to regard serious failure in any two subjects as a failure for the standards; hence a school may, and often does, do a large proportion of the work satisfactorily, and yet, so far as passing the standards is concerned, achieve a very poor result indeed. A much juster estimate of the state of our schools may be gained by a study of Tables II. and III., in one of which is shown the average quality of the answering in each subject, and in the other the quality of the answering in each subject by each standard. Viewed in the light of those tables the schools are seen to be meeting the requirements of a difficult syllabus with a very considerable degree of success; in no subject do they signally fail, and in several they do well; and those results are, I believe, gained with but little of the high pressure one hears so much about. In my own inspections, at any rate, I have seen nothing to warrant this cry of high pressure and overwork, and, if such exist in any part of the district unknown to me, it is, I have no doubt, due to injudicious management, and not to any inherent defect in the system of education. Of course every child has to do a fair amount of earnest work, but every one is the better for that. Those of the Board’s teachers with whom I have come into contact are for the most part zealous in the discharge of their duties, and much respected by the people amongst whom they live. Many of them conduct their schools with intelligence and success, and almost all manifest a desire to profit by suggestions. So far as most of the schools inspected and examined by me are concerned, I believe that I may say that the colony is getting a very fair return for the expenses incurred in connection with their maintenance.”—(*Mr. Goyen.*)

*Discipline and Behaviour in School.*—“Good order and discipline appeared to prevail in fully two-thirds of the schools that we inspected, and in several the behaviour and attention of the children while under examination were highly creditable: they evidently took a great interest in their work, and endeavoured to acquit themselves as well as possible. We rarely noticed in these schools any attempt at copying or otherwise taking unfair advantage. In the remaining schools the idea of order entertained by the teachers is far too limited. The children are inattentive, sit in all kinds of postures, go through the class movements without the slightest precision, disobey commands, and, in fact, do just as they like. It is needless to say that in such schools the teachers are either uncertificated or deficient in tact and firmness.”—(*Messrs. Edge and Cumming.*) “One of the most pleasing features of the Otago schools is the excellent behaviour of the pupils. In this respect the schools now stand on a much higher level than they occupied when I first came into contact with them. No feature in connection with the schools reflects greater credit on the teachers than this. During the examinations the children have done their work honestly, and in general with satisfactory care and attention. Rarely has there been occasion to complain of copying and other offences of that class.”—(*Mr. Petrie.*) “In most of the schools visited by me the discipline was found to be mild and effective. The class movements were executed with fair celerity, and generally with an absence of undue noise. The children were, for the most part, prompt in their obedience to orders, respectful in their bearing towards their teachers, and self-reliant during the examinations.”—(*Mr. Goyen.*)

*Better Results might be attained.*—“In conclusion, I have to report that the schools examined by me were generally in a satisfactory state of order and instruction, and were creditable to the ability and diligence of the teachers. In too many of them, especially those in agricultural districts, irregularity of attendance interfered seriously with the efficiency, and rendered satisfactory progress an impossibility. Notwithstanding the conscientious discharge of their duties, often under trying circumstances, I venture to say that not a few teachers, by perseveringly thinking out and searching out and putting in practice the best methods, and by giving attention to the preparation of lessons, so as to discover the most effective and economical plan of presenting them to their pupils, could produce results even more beneficial and satisfactory than are now attained.”—(*Mr. Taylor.*)

*District High Schools.*—“I am convinced that it is desirable to encourage the establishment of high schools in the country districts, under the provisions of clauses 55 and 56 of the Education Act. I was at one time of a somewhat different opinion. I feared that the attaching of a high school to an elementary school would be injurious to the latter. I now think that it is worth running some risk for the sake of the diffusion of culture which these high schools should bring about, and which can be brought about by them only. Large numbers of country settlers cannot afford to send their children to the secondary schools in the towns, and are beginning to look to the establishment of district high schools as the one means by which their families can have the advantages of superior education. It is well that this feeling should prevail. It is a feeling that should be fostered. It will not be well if some time hence the people of New Zealand can be described—as another people have been described by one of themselves—as ‘the most common-schooled and the least cultivated people in the world.’”—(*Mr. O’Sullivan.*)