

and neatness of work, well ordered rooms, and careful supervision of the children, the Masterton and Carterton Schools are deserving of much commendation.

COUNTRY SCHOOLS.—Karori, Wadestown, Ohariu, Tawa, Judgeford, Kaiwairi, Park Vale, and Eketahuna Schools continue to do good service, and are, more or less, in a satisfactory condition. Great improvement in the work, and in the number of standard passes, was shown at Kaiwairi; and a marked improvement at Matarawa, Kaitara, Mauriceville, Upper Hutt, and Makara; also the new school at Petone gives fair promise of satisfactory work. Although the instruction given at Johnsonville is good in higher standard work, and fairly good in all standards, and that given at Gladstone is moderately satisfactory, the condition of these schools is much to be deplored; only 22 children being presented for standard examination out of 76 on the books at Johnsonville, and 17 out of 44 at Gladstone. No passes were made in the higher standards at Tenui, and the result of the examination can only be looked upon as moderately satisfactory. A high classification for a country school is now reached at Opaki; and, considering the fact that all the children examined were presented in the higher standards, the results are good. Two schools, Fernridge and Waihenga, which for several years past have produced good work, show a falling-off this year. As the teachers are competent, and I believe industrious, it appears, at first sight, difficult to account for this, and such cases are certainly exceptional; but I think it arises in the former school from underestimating the work required, and in the latter partly from a preponderance of children of less than average ability, and partly from the continued ill health of the teacher. The work in both schools was not bad in method, and the written work of the Waihenga School was very neat, but the pupils had not sufficiently covered and traversed the ground. I observe, however, that there is some danger of successful teachers becoming over-confident of continued success, not only in country schools, but in one or two of the larger schools; and I will take this opportunity of reminding such teachers that no amount of experience or knowledge will avail in producing a return of good and improving work year by year without the exercise of patient industry, combined with a careful study of the methods to be used, in order to meet the advancing requirements of the times. The weakest of the country schools are those at Porirua, Pahautahau, and Maungaroa, in all of which much better work should be looked for. For quality of work the Karori, Kaiwairi, Tawa, and Opaki Schools take the lead. Needlework is not taught in the following schools: Karori, Makara, Kaitara, Matarawa, Fernridge, Mauriceville, and Eketahuna; and I beg to recommend the Board to assist each of these schools in obtaining a sewing-mistress.

RURAL SCHOOLS.—Owing chiefly to the accidental removal of families to other parts of the country, small schools fluctuate, from year to year, in the numbers attending. I am sorry to note that four of the rural schools are reduced to very low numbers from this cause. Only one or two of them call for any special report, the others having produced at least fair results, considering their circumstances. The Waingawa School has been in a reduced condition for several years, and the few children who should have been present for examination were mostly kept away by a heavy rainfall. The Kaitoke and Tauherenikau Schools were the least satisfactory.

THIRD AND FOURTH STANDARD WORK.—The greatest number of failures occurred in Standards III. and IV.; yet in the Thorndon School 81 children passed Standard III. out of 85 presented, and they were strong candidates in all the subjects. In the same school 55 passed Standard IV. out of 60 candidates. Again, in the Masterton School 54 passed Standard III. out of 55 presented, doing excellent work in all subjects; and in the Greytown School 20 passed Standard IV. out of 23 presented. Cases might be multiplied in country schools where these standards are carefully taught by the head-teacher. In point of fact, these standards are very well passed in many country schools. In the cases cited above the classes were under skilful and painstaking teachers. And it may be fairly said that, in schools in which a break-down occurred in one or both of these standards, the classes were not under thoroughly efficient teachers; and the head-teachers must generally be held responsible for the failures, because they were not mindful of the fact that these standards represent the heart of the school, both in strength and vitality, and that some of the best teaching power must be brought to bear upon them, and certainly a full share of the head-teachers' supervision and assistance. Standards III. and IV. will always be the most difficult to pass, for many reasons, the principal being the increased number of subjects requiring thought on the part of the pupils, and aptness and intelligence on the part of the teacher. It is in these standards that the first principles of grammar, the first broad ideas of geography and history, and the first exercise of thought and its expression in sentence, are taught; and in this work the skill of the best teacher is most tried. In the first two standards the memory and perception of a child are the chief faculties called into play; but in the Third and Fourth Standards the intelligence is awakened and the reflective powers exercised.

TEACHER AND PARENT.—There are disturbing or strengthening influences affecting school life other than those directly affecting the school work. Apart from the question of scholastic qualification, one teacher succeeds where another fails. It is sometimes accepted as an educational maxim that a good teacher can overcome all difficulties. Certainly a teacher who succeeds in winning the respect of the community amongst whom he labours exercises an outside influence strongly in favour of his school; whilst the teacher who seldom approaches those around him meets with many outside difficulties. In travelling from one district into another, the contrast which two adjacent districts present with regard to the interest taken in school matters is quite surprising. In one the interest shows itself in the regularity and punctuality of the attendance, in the energy of the School Committee, in the up-keep of the school, in the importance attached to the examinations, in the tidiness of the children, in their manners and brightness, and in a hundred little ways which an observant eye can readily detect; whilst in the other the want of general interest is conspicuous by the absence, more or less, of nearly all these good signs. In relation to a child, the teacher is the *alter ego* of the parent, and a good understanding should exist between them. Also the teacher, in order to understand and make due allowances for differences of circumstances, character, temperament, energy, and intelligence, must make himself acquainted with the homes of his pupils; for, by so doing, he will not only be guided in his work, but he will, from time to time, remove any misunderstandings which may arise in the minds of parents from the *ex parte* statements about school life brought home by the pupils. There should