

From this table it appears that the number of children who annually pass the standard requirements is steadily increasing. In 1880 there were 1,032 children who passed the examination, in 1881 the numbers were 1,213, and for the past year 1,314. Judged by the passes alone there is evidence of progress in the schools, but it is when a comparison is made between the children who passed during the last three years in Standard IV. and upward that the progress becomes most marked. In 1880 no pupils passed in Standard VI., 25 succeeded in passing Standard V., and 93 Standard IV.; in 1881 there were 10 children who passed Standard VI., 37 Standard V., and 135 Standard IV.; but in the year just closed there were 21 passes in Standard VI., 9 of them being girls, 70 in Standard V., and 156 in Standard IV., or a total of nearly 19 per cent. of the number of children who passed in any standard during the year. When it is remembered that every boy and girl who succeeded in passing one of these standards must have obtained 60 per cent. of the marks obtainable in reading and definition, spelling and dictation, writing, arithmetic, grammar and composition, geography, and English history, the foregoing results are encouraging. I do not wish to be misunderstood: education is making progress in this district, but the credit must be divided among a comparatively small number of schools. To some of the teachers school work is too much of a mechanical routine, and the principles of teaching appear to be little understood. During my visits of inspection I paid special attention to the methods employed by teachers when giving lessons such as reading, arithmetic, geography, history, and grammar, and I can well understand why so many children fail to reach the standard requirements. The reading-lessons, even in some of the larger schools, continue to be taught (?) by head-teachers and, of course, their junior teachers in a way which a moment's consideration ought to tell them cannot be successful. The form of procedure is generally as follows: Just before the lesson begins the teacher borrows a book from one of the pupils, who is told to "look over," inquires from the class the page or lesson to be read, bids A, B, and C "go on," or "next," until, perhaps, the children have read twenty or thirty words each. Sometimes a few spelling tests are given, and then the lesson is over, finished as it was begun, without thought on the part of teacher or taught, and without the display of a single quality worthy of a teacher of young children. In one school a teacher, at my request, gave a first lesson in multiplication to Standard I. Seven figures were set down in a line on the blackboard, and underneath the unit was placed the figure 3, and the teacher thus began: "Three fours are —?" The answer from the top boy was "16;" "Tell him," said the teacher, pointing to the next pupil: "16" was the answer for the second time. "No, they do not," retorted the teacher, "they make 12: set down 2 on the line, and carry 1." On the wall, near at hand, hung a counting frame, but "to tell," rather than "to train" by means of concretes, was the correct thing to do, at least in the opinion of the teacher; and thus the lesson went on, mechanical, lifeless, and resultless. I need not say that the teacher was untrained and uncertificated, and I give this example to show the danger of employing unskilled persons in a profession which, of all others, requires careful preparation and training, if the children are to become citizens characterized by intelligence and self-reliance. With much of the work in some of the schools I am able to express my entire satisfaction. These schools, in the order of merit, are—Gisborne, Napier, Taradale, Takapau, Wallingford, Makatoku, Port Ahuriri, Ormond, Te Ongaonga, Havelock, Waipawa, Wairoa, and Kaikora. Several of the other schools are in very fair working order, but it is when the really good schools are placed in contrast beside those where the work and general tone are unsatisfactory that one is inclined to think it would be an advantage to keep schools closed rather than place them in the hands of half-hearted and incompetent teachers. The paper work done by the pupils in Standards V. and VI. has been mostly of a high order, although I observe there is a tendency in these standards to neglect reading and writing as separate class subjects, and as a consequence, some of the pupils only obtained just pass marks. The gold medal annually given by Mr. H. S. Tiffen to the boy or girl in Standard V. or VI. who passes best in my annual examination has proved a great incentive to the children, as it marks out the winner as the dux of the year in the schools of the district. Last year the medal was won by Mary Hall, of the Gisborne School, and the year previous by Kate Dunn, of the Napier District School.

OPTIONAL SUBJECTS.—The optional subjects, such as drawing, military drill, and elementary science, receive but little attention. Gisborne and Napier are the only schools where extras, except military drill, are successfully taught, although there are a number of other schools where singing is taught with a fair amount of success. At Waipawa the master teaches gymnastics very successfully, but in no other school, as far as I am aware, is there even an attempt made to teach the subject. Where the standard requirements under Regulation 7 are so very exacting, much cannot be expected from the country schools under Regulation 9. In my opinion some of the optional subjects are of much more importance for the children to learn in certain districts than the compulsory subjects, and I could wish it was in the power of an Inspector to recognize a so-called optional subject in place of a compulsory one for examination purposes. This would allow more scope for the teaching of such subjects as drawing, elementary science, singing from note, drill for boys, and needlework for girls, and any other subject which the circumstances of a district might specially require. In England, the only obligatory subjects are reading, writing, arithmetic, and needlework for girls; and subjects such as history, geography, and grammar are made class subjects: that is, they may be taken up by an upper or lower division of a school, but the children constituting a division are not individually examined. There is also a third list of subjects called "specific subjects," the examination in which is individual, and they include agriculture, botany, domestic economy, animal physiology, &c. These subjects can only be taken by pupils in the upper standards, and no pupil may take more than two of such subjects. This freedom of action in the teaching and choice of certain subjects for examination I should much like to see adopted here. Under present arrangements the teachers, more especially in the smaller schools, find the time at their disposal barely sufficient for the preparation of the children in the compulsory subjects, and the consequence is that such utility subjects as drawing, physical training, and the elements of natural science, being optional, are neglected, in order that certain compulsory subjects of far less value might be memorized by the children, only to be forgotten when the examination is over.

SEWING.—I have already reported upon the great improvement in this subject, which has, no