

tion of the plan followed in Nelson's "Geography and Atlas," namely, that of substituting straight lines for the meridians and parallels, thus dividing the map into squares of (say) fifty miles. These lines should be numbered from two that should cross each other at Wellington, as the political capital of the colony. The distance from any one place to another could then be approximately ascertained with comparative ease, and the younger children could form a much better idea of the size of the whole or of any part. I need scarcely say that such a map would not supersede the ordinary one for the use of the upper classes. I regret that the Board has not yet been able to adopt my suggestion as to the introduction of the "Royal Reader History," in the place of the textbook now in use, but would strongly recommend its adoption as soon as possible.

19. SCHOOL BUILDINGS.—All the school buildings in the district, with the exception of a few erected within the last two years, are more or less in need of repair, and the condition of some of them is truly lamentable. The Kumara and Greymouth schools especially are in a very discreditable condition. Unless some considerable amount of money is at once devoted to the repairing and painting of the buildings in this district, a very much heavier expense will be entailed upon the new Boards within a very short period.

While on the subject of school buildings, I must enter the strongest possible protest against their being converted, for however short a time, into publichouses, and this is, to all intents and purposes, done by several Committees in this district when they permit the sale of intoxicating drinks to be carried on at such meetings as balls and concerts held in the schoolrooms—buildings supposed to be specially devoted to the moral and intellectual improvement of the rising generation. It will be urged, in extenuation of this practice, that the funds so obtained are devoted to charitable purposes, but the charity which can be evoked only by appealing to one of the lowest forms of sensual indulgence is utterly unworthy of the name, and the value of its contributions is as nothing when compared with the paramount importance of preserving the school premises from any but the best, purest, and happiest associations, to say nothing of the lamentable evils resulting from the habit which such a practice is calculated to encourage and develop amongst the youth of the district. There can be no doubt that the powers given to School Committees by subsection (3) of clause 84 of the Act were never intended to be used for a purpose so distinctly opposed to its whole spirit and object.

The objections urged above are not to be regarded as merely imaginary or sentimental. We have had during the past year conclusive proof of their validity in the occurrence of a grievous scandal in connection with a teacher, that was brought about in consequence of one of these meetings. In a former report I brought this matter under the notice of the Board, and ventured a suggestion to the effect that the Minister's attention be drawn to the matter with a request that he will take such steps as he may think necessary to prevent such abuses in the future.

Great complaints are made by teachers with regard to the damage done to school property, and of much trouble and inconvenience occasioned, in consequence of the buildings being used for other than school purposes, such as concerts, theatrical entertainments, &c. Much of this might, I think, be avoided if Committees made it a rule to require a deposit of, say, £5 or £10 before granting the use of the building to any persons, on the understanding that any damage done to the school property should be paid for out of the amount so deposited.

20. The difficulties experienced by Committees in keeping the school buildings in a proper state of repair with the small funds made available for the purpose, is a general and just cause of complaint in this district. With regard to large schools, such as those at Greymouth and Hokitika, I have always been, and am still, of opinion that the employment of a permanent custodian would be the means of reducing materially the expense of executing small repairs, and that at a cost little in excess of what must be paid for the mere cleaning of the schools and lighting of fires in winter. Of course I am supposing that the position is filled by a person of energetic, industrious, and sober habits, and physically capable of performing the work required, and that he is placed under the immediate control and direction of the headmaster. With regard to the smaller schools, and especially those situated at any distance from the chief towns, I would suggest that each school should be provided with a good ladder, and if, in addition, a few useful tools, such as a hammer, a gimlet, a screwdriver and a handful of useful nails and tacks, formed part of the equipment of each school, and the whole were placed under the charge of the teacher, he would be unworthy of his position if he could not, by interesting the older boys in the work, and even by assisting himself if necessary, do much to preserve the building and fences from premature dilapidation. How often would the timely driving of a nail, the tightening of a wire, or the turning of a screw have prevented a gap in the fence, the blowing-down of a chimney or the loss of a door-handle, &c. ! Nor would there be anything in the least derogatory to the dignity of the teacher or of his profession in thus taking an active interest in the preservation of the property placed under his care. Such a course of action would of itself exert an educational influence of a very valuable nature, if it were only in counteracting to some small extent the mischievous and increasing tendency on the part of most colonists to expect that everything should be done for them by the local or general Government. Some few teachers in country districts have already shown their willingness to assist in maintaining the building, furniture, and grounds in good order, and no doubt all would do so if the few necessary implements were always at hand, and they were freed from the necessity either of borrowing from a neighbour or of providing them for themselves.

21. PUPIL-TEACHERS.—Twenty-two pupil-teachers were examined this year at the schools in which they are employed. Of these, nine were examined for admission to the first (highest) class, two for admission to the second, seven to the third, and four to the fourth, or lowest class. All of these passed, and four of the first, five of the third, and one of the fourth have passed with credit. Table C shows the marks gained by the different pupil-teachers in each subject of examination. I have made a slight alteration this year in the mode of representing the relative positions of the candidates, as shown by the number of marks obtained. Last year the marks for Latin, which is