

prevail to a large extent during desk practice in sums. To a good many of the large schools these strictures do not apply, but the number in which the subject is well taught increases but very slowly. I consider that the test applied in Standard V is considerably easier than that of Standard IV., and is in no way more severe than that used for Standard VI., where the results are 20 per cent. higher.

Grammar and composition were in general very fairly done, and the work of Standard IV in these subjects was distinctly more accurate and methodical than in former years.

I have been very fairly satisfied with the knowledge of geography except in Standard II., where a careful oral examination showed that much of the teaching had been purely mechanical. The instruction was in some cases such as few would credit. Pupils who could repeat definitions of terms with perfect readiness, were quite unable to point out on a map an island, a cape, or almost any other of the features they could so easily define. In nearly a half of the schools examined by me the earliest lessons had been crammed and not taught. The pupils had gained no idea of the facts of the lessons and of their conventional representation on maps and plans, and the teachers appeared surprised that anything more should be expected of their pupils than an accurate repetition of the form of words they had committed to memory. The discovery of this fact gave me a very painful shock, for I cherished the belief that very few teachers would knowingly subordinate the educative training of their scholars to the mere scoring of passes at an examination. I trust that our unwelcome experience has taught myself and my colleagues to study to adopt methods of examination that will encourage sound training, and expose and discourage cramming and mechanical work. Most if not all of the schools in which this defect was found have already adopted more rational methods, and I have no doubt that such a state of things will not often be met with in future.

History was on the whole fairly known, but in Standard III. a careful oral examination disclosed a state of instruction almost as unsatisfactory as in the geography of Standard II. There was consequently a large number of failures in this subject, the total results in the standard being 18 per cent. below those of last year, when the work was tested by answers written on slates. In a good few schools the nature and significance of the events taught were well apprehended, and, although it is difficult to secure intelligent teaching of history at this early stage, the successful work in a minority of the schools shows that with suitable treatment valuable results may be gained. It is to the numerous failures in the geography of Standard II. and the history of Standard III. that the decline in the total results for the year must be mainly attributed. I have every confidence that next year the work in these subjects will rise to a satisfactory level of proficiency.

Object-lessons continue to be given with regularity and fair skill. More advanced object-lessons have in many cases taken the place of instruction in science.

Singing is well taught in most of the larger schools, though it spreads but slowly in the smaller ones, where, however, it is often difficult to find sufficient time for practice.

The discipline is excellent in a large number of schools, and unsatisfactory but in few. A weakness of control, that does not amount to positive bad discipline, is somewhat prevalent, not only in the smaller schools, but also in the classes of some one or more of the assistants in most of the large schools. In a few cases the government is so bad that removal of the teacher or assistant should be resorted to as soon as possible. The behaviour of the pupils is on the whole very good. Still, there are numerous village and rural schools where the pupils are deficient in politeness, simply from want of a little training, and not from any wish to offend good taste. In such cases the teachers could easily do much to improve the manners of their scholars. I should be glad to see them give a little steady attention to this important matter.

The services rendered by the pupil-teachers deserve a word of recognition. Some of them do excellent work, and nearly all are earnest and painstaking. The efficiency of the teaching might be greatly increased if the head-teachers would take more pains to train them to good methods. They would find it labour well spent.

Throughout the year one or two representatives of the Committees were invited to be present at the examinations. I was much pleased with the interest they took in the work, and with the satisfaction they showed when the schools made a creditable appearance.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Education Board.

DONALD PETRIE, M.A., Inspector.

SIR,—

2. MR. TAYLOR'S REPORT.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ended 31st December, 1883.

I visited for purposes of general inspection fifty-five schools, examined unaided thirty-eight schools, and took part, either with Mr Petrie or Mr Goyen, in the examination of the twenty-five largest schools. My work was not confined to any particular locality, but was spread over the greater part of the education district, and extended from the Waitaki to Catlin's, and from Dunedin to Lake Hawea. The only part not visited by me, either in the way of examination or inspection, was the Maniototo County. I do not consider it necessary to report this year again on the various subjects of the school course in detail, nor to make particular reference to the results of the examination. The tables given elsewhere, containing summaries of the results, are capable of affording extensive and accurate information on these points, and they show unmistakably that the work of the schools has been efficiently carried on, and testify to the skill and diligence of the teachers, with few exceptions. As good results are dependent in a very great measure upon good methods of teaching, I prefer on this occasion to refer shortly to a few defects in method that came under my notice during a course of inspection visits.

The teaching is not always so educative in its nature as it should be, and leaves the impression that, with some, the end justifies the means, if high percentages are obtained, the manner of gaining them is considered of small moment. But in education the means employed are all-important.