

too common a practice in Hawke's Bay to carry on school work with what I can only characterize as educational make-shifts, but, after five years' experience of them, I have come to the conclusion that an effort should be made to dispense with them altogether. A make-shift school often means a make-shift teacher and make-shift results, and I cannot rest satisfied until every child in my district has been placed on fairly competitive terms in the way of acquiring knowledge. To me there appears no valid reason why the smallest of the district schools should not enjoy the privilege of good school buildings, and all the accessories which go towards making a good school, equally with the largest schools but this cannot be done until the building requirements of the district have been fully supplied. If the education of children is to be undertaken at all, I submit that it should be with the object of training them to appreciate what is good and beautiful in all things, and all difficulties, therefore, in the way of their moral, mental, and physical progress should be minimized as much as possible. Certainly the truest economy in matters relating to the education of children is to be found in providing them with the best buildings, appliances, and teachers it is possible for money to purchase, for bad workmen with bad accommodation and appliances can only produce indifferent results at the best, and I urge upon the Board the desirability of completing the building requirements in each district, as, until this has been done, the education of many children attending the schools must be incomplete and unsatisfactory.

CONDITION OF BUILDINGS.—Most of the school-houses and residences built during the past five years are in a sound condition, but, as pointed out by me a year ago, they are much in need of a coat of paint. Inside and outside the paint-brush is badly wanted, and it would be well if this work could be undertaken as well for the good influence which neat and pleasant buildings have upon the education and training of children as for the purpose of keeping the buildings in good repair.

SCHOOL APPARATUS.—Among the teachers I find that sufficient care is not taken with the school apparatus, and appliances, and school property in general. Few of the schools have cause to complain of either the quantity or quality of the apparatus provided by the Board, but in some instances, owing to the want of ordinary vigilance on the part of teachers, valuable apparatus has been carelessly or wantonly destroyed. I fear it is becoming too much the fashion among teachers to look upon preparing a class in the stereotyped standard-work as a teacher's only duty, forgetting that everything which tends to improve the habits and the tastes of children, whether it be in seeing neat and tidy school grounds, clean and pleasant school-rooms, or well-kept school appliances, is a phase of training which every teacher might well foster among his pupils. In several of the schools I have found maps being used for window-blinds, the backs of reading-cards for time-tables, and, for the want of a nail or a screw at the proper time, easels and school gates have been broken and fences destroyed. I am pleased to say that these remarks do not apply to all schools or to all teachers. There are schools in my district where the teachers take a pride in beautifying the walls of their schoolrooms, and where the apparatus is as well cared for as if it belonged to themselves, and, if such care can be taken by some teachers, it seems to me that similar care in the preservation of school property should be demanded from all.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.—It is gratifying to notice that a fair improvement has taken place during the past year in the regularity of children at school. The average attendance for the year was 2,754.5, which is 77.2 per cent. of the roll-number whilst in 1882 the average attendance was 74 per cent. of the roll-number, or a difference of 3.2 per cent. in favour of the past year. Possibly the absence of epidemics amongst the children such as prevailed in 1881–82 may, in some measure, account for the improvement in the attendance, but I am inclined to the opinion that the real causes are to be found in the better organization and equipment of the schools, and to the growing interest shown by parents and Committees in the progress of education. In the best schools one seldom hears complaints about the irregularity of children, although comparatively few pupils obtain certificates of attendance under section 79 of the Education Act. I notice that, out of 5,148 children who attended school during the year, twenty-four gained certificates of the first class, and fifty-three of the second class. In twenty-four of the schools no certificates of attendance were gained, and in eight schools only were there pupils who obtained certificates of the first class.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE.—The compulsory clause, though nominally in force in all the larger districts, is really a dead letter. In a single instance only has the aid of a Magistrate been invoked against neglectful parents, and the case was dismissed on the parents in question agreeing to comply with the Act. But, as shown above, I think there can be no doubt that irregularity at school is diminishing in the district, and it may be that, as schools improve in efficiency and attractiveness, compulsion will become unnecessary. Children are fond of company, and they are fond of learning, and I have never yet met a child who disliked school simply from a dislike of learning or of company. Given good school-houses and appliances, trained, sympathetic, and intelligent teachers, and good working Committees, and I am inclined to think that the attendance difficulty will have been in a great measure solved, although for years to come one must expect to find a small remnant of selfish and indifferent parents, persistently refusing to do their duty to their offspring unless enforced by the stronger power of the law.

STANDARD EXAMINATIONS.—Passing now to the work in connection with the standard examinations, there are several features of interest which deserve attention. On the days appointed for the examination of the schools, out of 3,513 children on the roll, 3,526 or nearly 93 per cent. were present. At Hampden, Makatoku, Patutahi, Port Ahuriri, Puketapu, and Tarawera, all the children on the school-roll were in attendance and at Waipawa there was a single absentee out of 122 children on the roll. Considering the unsettled state of the weather that prevailed and the bad condition of the roads and tracks in bush and outlying districts during the progress of my examinations, such an attendance as the above appears to me highly encouraging. I am somewhat at a loss, however, to understand why so many more children should endeavour to be present on examination-day than upon ordinary school-days. It has usually been supposed that inspection-