

though able to teach, hang back from doing so. I am afraid, too, that some endeavour not to qualify in order to escape the trouble of teaching. I certainly think that teachers showing such a spirit are unworthy of promotion.

The practice of gymnastics continues to extend. The prejudice against it felt by many at first appears to be dying out. A teacher of a large school has suggested that the last half of each short interval daily could be well applied to putting pupils through the movements without apparatus. I think this an excellent plan, and strongly recommend it. Of course this is an addition to the usual time given to gymnastics during school hours. It is plain that this time may be enough to teach the exercises, but it is not enough to have much effect on the frames of the pupils.

The way the pupils in many of the country schools sit at their desks is excruciating. They loll about and stretch out their legs; when they hold up one hand to indicate their ability to answer a question, the palm of the other is brought down with a bang upon the form. The permitting this sort of thing is incident to young teachers.

I must again call attention to the ventilation of schools, and to point out that the object should be to have the air in the room as pure as possible without dangerous draughts. (See report for 1883.) The teacher should every day and many times a day note the state of the atmosphere, and arrange the opening of the doors and windows accordingly. He should take care that the rooms are thoroughly aired during all intervals. I revert to this because I find nearly every day that ventilation is not enough attended to, even by teachers from whom better things might be expected.

It would be of considerable advantage if country teachers would make themselves acquainted with the best means of restoring black-boards when worn out, and of cleaning desks. It has been found that washing with hot water and soft soap is very effective with the latter when they require cleaning all over.

I have again to remind many teachers that by the vigilant eye only can order be kept in a school.

In many places teachers do their best to make attractive, not only their schools, but the school-grounds and the grounds attached to their houses. I regret to say that in very many cases the state of these grounds is simply disgraceful. There is little excuse for this. Where a dwelling-house is provided for a teacher it is not too much to expect that he shall keep the ground attached to it in order. It is easy in many neighbourhoods to procure native trees to plant the school-grounds, and in many others trees of some kind can be had for nothing, or at a very small cost. A Committee will seldom fail to assist a teacher when they find him animated by a proper spirit in these matters. Much of the general educating effect which the placing of a school in a district should bring about is lost when the school is allowed to become an eyesore instead of an attraction.

I have, &c.,

R. J. O'SULLIVAN.

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland.

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 19th February, 1885.

I have the honour to lay before you my first annual report on the schools of this district, for the year ending 31st December, 1884.

Early in February, after making all arrangements for the introduction of the pupil-teachers system of instruction under regulations specially framed to meet the necessities of the district, I paid my first visit of inspection to all your schools then in operation. Anxious to obtain a correct idea of the character of the instruction, there being none of the children's examination papers in existence in this office, I examined, with a few exceptions, one or more classes in each school. These examinations showed conclusively that there was no dependence to be placed on the classification of the scholars, and that no effort, however determined or efficient, could attain even fair success at inspection. This condition seems to me to have been brought about chiefly through the neglect of any regular attempt to follow the course of instruction laid down in the syllabus, the absence of thoroughness in the work itself, and a pass examination of too easy a nature. By the resolution of the Board on the 14th April I was empowered to make the necessary arrangements thought desirable for the withdrawal from presentation of children whose attainments were unequal to the task of passing the next higher standard. Fortunately the alteration made in Regulation 2 by the Order in Council of the 19th June disposed of this difficulty, as it gave to the teachers full power to present or withdraw. That the teachers are alive to the fact that your schools are not in a satisfactory state is borne out by the large number of re-examinations in standards already passed; still more so by the high percentage (65 per cent.) of these scholars who failed in more than two subjects. In thirty-two schools the teachers availed themselves of the regulation, four presenting more for re-examination than presentation. I have carefully abstained from any interference with the action of teachers in this matter; at the same time I must say that many have afforded to their scholars the opportunity of passing by presenting them when their chance of success was known as hopeless both to their teachers and myself.

Throughout the year over 130 visits were paid to your schools. Excepting Rahotu, recently opened, and Albert Road, which was closed for a portion of the year, every school has been visited at least three times. The temporary school opened at Warea during the second week of December I was unable to visit owing to the bad weather prevailing at the time. With the intention of assisting teachers to reorganize and reclassify their schools, I have during these visits tested their work; also given model lessons and advice where required.

The attendance (2,113) at the close of the year shows the very small increase of fifty-three over the number (2,060) in attendance at the close of the preceding one. Of the 2,069 scholars whose names are entered on the examination schedules, 978 were presented in standards, 282 presented