

Extra Subjects.—Object-lessons have been taken in all but four of the schools visited by me. In fifty-six they had been treated very successfully or fairly well, in twenty they had been very poorly treated, and consisted of little more than a few names and definitions by rote. Drawing has been taught successfully in thirty schools, with a pretty close observance of the order of instruction laid down by the department; in thirty-seven it consisted only of freehand, practised on slates, or was poorly taught; in thirteen schools it was not taught at all. Recitation has been well or fairly taught in fifty-three schools; in twenty-seven it was mere repetition. The tonic sol-fa system of teaching singing has been adopted in the majority of these schools; in some the old notation; in twenty-six singing has not been attempted. The children showed a good acquaintance with the elementary laws of health in forty-four schools; in thirty the subject had been unsuccessfully taken up; in six it formed no part of the school course. A good knowledge of elementary science other than laws of health was shown in nineteen schools; in nine a slight knowledge; in fifty-two no instruction was given in this branch, though in a number of cases the teachers were well qualified to give it. The Board's resolution requiring that laws of health should be taught two half-hours in each week renders it very difficult for the teachers in small schools to find a place in the time-table for any other branch of science; and I recommend that this resolution be somewhat modified, seeing that section 19 of the new Standard Regulations reconciles the claim of this branch of elementary science with that of other branches to have a place in the school course. Unless this is done the time which should be devoted to the standard work will be encroached on.

Discipline.—In the great majority of the schools visited the discipline was very good. The Board's attention has been called to the few cases in which it was not so.

Small Number of Male Pupil-teachers.—The small proportion of male pupil-teachers calls for some attention. One would almost think that youths were beginning to look upon teaching in the primary schools as more peculiarly the province of the other sex. One cause which keeps lads from choosing this occupation is the immediate high rate of wage which can be earned in other employments in the colony. A lad must be fifteen before he can be a pupil-teacher at £30 per annum; while at that age, if he has made good progress, he can find other more lucrative employment. Of course he cannot expect much when beginning to learn an art; but the prospect for the future, perhaps, does not seem so clear or so promising as in other employments. The calling may seem to demand more restraint than a lad brought up under the free institutions in a colony may care for. A schoolmaster can occasionally do much to engage in his own calling some of his more promising scholars. I have in several instances noticed that where the teacher has been an enthusiast, thoroughly devoted to his work, one or more of his scholars have been brought into sympathy with him therein, and have resolved to follow a calling which they have felt to be so honourable and so useful. I think that some concession should be made, so that suitable lads may not be prevented from entering the profession of teaching by difficulties at the outset, and that therefore, when there is a vacancy, a male pupil-teacher should be allowed to begin his course in the school where he has been educated. Notwithstanding the objection which may be made on the ground that a pupil-teacher is not likely to exert sufficient control over a class in a school which he has attended as a scholar, I think the concession referred to might be made, as the allowance (£30) is not enough to maintain a youth who lives away from home, and there may be many suitable applicants whose parents are not in a position to supplement their salary. A head-master who rules his school well will take care that his pupil-teachers exert proper control over their classes. It is an advantage for a lad to continue his studies as a pupil-teacher under the master who has brought him through the standard course. Something should be done to facilitate the entrance of suitable lads into this calling, and the concession here referred to would, I believe, prove beneficial in this respect.

There are many other matters which call for attention in a report of this nature; but I have thought it better to deal fully with a few than to treat many in a cursory manner.

I have, &c.,
W. FIDLER, M.A., Inspector.

The Secretary, Board of Education, Auckland.

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 23rd February, 1886.

I have the honour to lay before you the annual report on the schools of the district for the year ending the 31st December, 1885.

Since the close of last year the only change affecting the number of schools was that caused by the amalgamation of the Courtney Street Girls' School and the Central School, New Plymouth, thus lessening the number by one. As to the wisdom of the step it is unnecessary to make any remark, but I desire to express a hope that both buildings will, when the Board's funds permit, form one commodious structure. At Inglewood the erection of the new school was delayed by questions affecting the site; hence both schools were examined before the reorganization took place. The proposed arrangements for Waitara are still an open question; but I trust no time will be lost unnecessarily in coming to a decision, as the obtainable results are not a fair return for the money expended.

Besides the usual visits of inspection and examination I have again been able to undertake, with a few exceptions, one or more surprise visits to all the schools in the district. My attendance during these visits has generally extended throughout the day, or, at least, the greater portion of it. Organizing, criticising time-tables, and giving practical lessons on method have occupied much of my time at these visits, as I am aware that successful results will only be obtained by giving as much help as possible to those teachers whose only experience has been confined to their own schools. Classes were also examined to get at the weak points of the instruction, thus enabling the teachers