

residing within three miles of the schoolhouse. The thought has even suggested itself to me at times that it might be well that School Boards should be intrusted with powers to close any school for a year or more where the attendance bears no proportion to the school roll. I must confess, however, that I have little faith in the appeal to compulsion in this difficulty, and I believe the practical remedy, as far as there is one, lies in the exercise of the powers of persuasion and remonstrance on the part of teacher and Committee. Certainly a great deal can be done by the teacher towards influencing parents to send their children to school regularly, and nothing makes me take a more hopeful view of a school on the morning of examination day than to find, on reference to the roll, that there are no absentees that day. Some teachers in this district, whose hearts are in their work, and whose delight is the efficiency of their schools, simply will not stand irregular attendance on the part of their scholars, and make so much remonstrance about it that indolent parents find it saves trouble to send the children regularly. The simple plan of sending a printed form of inquiry to the parent of every child absent from school, on every occasion of absence, seems the most efficacious in keeping down the evil, always excepting that best plan of all, of making the teaching so efficient and attractive that both scholars and parents will be unwilling to lose the benefits of it. A visit from the teacher to the parent who is remiss in sending his children will often have the desired effect; and, when this fails, a visit from one or more members of the Committee has been tried elsewhere with good results. An additional plan has been tried here and in other places, and, though it involves the outlay of a little money, such money seems to be well spent. I refer to the custom of awarding to every child who has made a certain maximum of attendances a handsomely ornamented card or certificate of attendance, signed by the Chairman of the Committee, and presented on the annual *fête* day of the school. The great need is to call public attention to the enormity of the evil, and to bring the pressure of public opinion to bear powerfully on culpable parents, so that a man who continues to offend shall find himself outside the sympathies of his neighbours. This, I believe, will be the surest way of overcoming the evil complained of.

*Registers.*—At my annual visit to the schools I have made it an invariable practice to supervise the attendance registers and verify some of the calculations in them. My experience teaches me that this practice is a very necessary one, from the tendency that exists to keep these returns carelessly and incompletely unless they are subject to revision. I am glad, however, to be able to affirm that a considerable improvement has taken place in the way in which the registers are kept; so that in most schools it is now easy to verify the result. Inaccuracies, too, are by no means so numerous as they used to be, whilst in some schools the records are kept with a correctness, clearness, and neatness altogether admirable.

I append to this report—(1) A table (Table III.), for which I am indebted to the Secretary, showing the average age of the children presented for examination in each standard class; (2) a table (Table IV.) showing the percentage of passes (in subjects) obtained in each school at the annual examination of the Inspector; (3) my annual report on the extra classes at the Riverton District High School. [Appendices not reprinted.]

I have, &c.

JOHN GAMMELL, B.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Southland.

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