

TABLE B.

No. of Schools examined in each Standard.	Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Percentage of Failures in Standards.
							Yrs. mos.	
18	Above Stand. VI.	32	...	...	...	...	...	...
48	Standard VI. ...	162	6	9	50	97	14 2	34.0
60	" V. ...	352	20	20	123	189	13 8	39.4
76	" IV. ...	701	47	44	245	365	12 9	40.1
77	" III. ...	1,095	57	70	297	671	11 9	30.7
76	" II. ...	1,093	50	90	164	789	10 5	17.2
78	" I. ...	1,010	22	63	118	807	9 3	12.8
No. of schools examined in one or more standards, 80.		4,445	202	296	997	2,918	*	25.47

* Mean of average age, 12 years.

The number of children presented shows an increase for the year of 357, and it is pleasing to find such a high percentage of those presented attending at the examination. This percentage has increased yearly for the past six years, and has risen from 92.1 in 1884 to 95.4 in 1889. At the majority of schools the children appear to thoroughly enjoy the examination. The number of excepted pupils is rather high, but for this the new flax industry is largely responsible, and also the progress of settlement in the back country, for a number of children from outside came into the district who had not received nearly a year's tuition from the time they passed their last standards until my examination. The percentage of failures is higher than in the previous year by 2.8.

Table B plainly shows how comparatively few children remain at school long enough to reach the higher standards. Thus, while over 1,000 children were presented in each of the lower three classes, Standard I., Standard II., and Standard III., the number dropped from 1,095 in Standard III. to 701 in Standard IV., to 352 in Standard V., and to 162 in Standard VI.

With regard to the percentages of passes for the year, Standard III. shows an improvement of nearly 4 per cent., and Standard I. and Standard II. are much the same in both years. In the upper three standards, however, there was a great falling off; and this, perhaps, was to be expected, partly because drawing was during last year for the first time a pass subject in Standard IV., and partly because the upper standards in *small schools* can, I am convinced, do really well under the present regulations only every second year, and 1888 was their good year. This opinion is partly borne out by the fact that, of the fifty failures in Standard VI., twenty-five happened at schools officered by only one teacher, while at nine large schools only seventeen pupils failed out of seventy-five examined. There is no doubt that teachers in sole charge of schools are at a great disadvantage with respect to teaching the upper standards; still, if pupils attended more regularly, so much difficulty would not be found in meeting the requirements of the syllabus. Taking all circumstances into consideration, however, I venture the opinion that it would be well if the arithmetic of these standards were lightened. In Standard IV. fewer measures might be required, but I would have mensuration taught, the measurements to be given in only one and the same denomination, as chains or yards. In Standard VI. the time devoted to stocks, present worth, and banker's discount (in the last two I never set questions) might far better be employed in *graving* in boys' minds rules such as mensuration and decimals that have been merely *tinkled with a brush*, so to speak, and in making them thoroughly accurate in ordinary money computations in buying and selling, paying wages, clearing and fencing land, &c., for in sums of this description I find it merely a question of amount of figuring required as regards pupils going wrong in their working. As an example of the way in which rules are slurred over without being digested I may say that I have found pupil-teachers who could wrestle with such a sum as "A bill for £400 was drawn on the 23rd April, to be paid six months after date: if this was discounted on the 4th July at 4 per cent., what was the banker's discount?" quite unable to calculate rough discount at 5 per cent. on a shop bill.

But another cause has militated in no small degree against the success of the district in the past year. An unusually large number of schools were closed for some time owing to illnesses, promotions, or transfers of head teachers and assistants; and at these schools I did not expect, and did not receive, good results. With a view to guarding against such closing of schools in future the Board recently appointed a "relieving teacher." I believe that there is room for two such teachers, especially if they are given fixed appointments shortly after they enter the service. Again, several of our pupil-teachers have been promoted to the rank of assistants, or to take sole charge of schools, and it has sometimes been found difficult to fill their places; for, while in some parts of the district—notably Wanganui and Hawera—pupil-teachers are to be found readily enough, in others it is not easy to get them. In this respect some relief would probably be obtained if pupil-teachers asked to live away from home were offered £10 per annum extra salary. If something of the kind is not done we shall shortly have in the country schools a certain number of very inferior pupil-teachers.