

whether Hokitika on the west coast of New Zealand lies east or west of Dunedin on the east coast. It is perhaps in some measure a result of the weight of the syllabus that in so many schools a knowledge of the contents of the text-book is all that is aimed at in the teaching of geography. Supplementary teaching of wider scope and livelier interest certainly does not in our schools occupy the place it should, and the treatment is proportionately lacking in educative value.

The condition of the school buildings and premises is generally satisfactory, but very little is being done to ornament or improve the school grounds by planting or gardening. It is much to be regretted that the country teachers do not take more interest in these matters, as a little encouragement from them would generally induce the Committees to make permanent improvements for ornament or shelter. Children's gardens are occasionally seen, but only where the teacher sets them the example by keeping a nice garden. Much could be done to form the taste in this direction if shelter from winds were provided, and if the teachers would interest themselves more in the extra-mural employments and interests of their scholars. The constant changing of teachers militates very strongly against any improvement in this direction.

A special report on the work of the district high schools has been already submitted to the Board. Considering the very limited staff of these schools, the quantity and quality of the work done in them are really admirable. We refer to them here only to point out the unnecessary prominence they give to mathematics as compared with English. It is very desirable that the systematic study of composition, with the aid of a good text-book, should find a place in the English course, while the reading of classical English works should embrace a fair amount both of prose and of poetry. The second part of the typical prose extracts, published at the Clarendon Press, would supply varied prose reading for a series of years, and in addition to a selection from this a suitable complete play of Shakespeare, or any of the poems edited for school use and published in Macmillan's series, should not be beyond the power of the pupils who attend the higher classes of these schools. To make room for this development of English study, the scope of the mathematical teaching would have to be narrowed, and this can be done without inconvenience.

We have constantly thrust on our notice the unsuitable line of study adopted for the pupils who remain at the ordinary public schools after passing Standard VI.—the pupils of the so-called Standard VII. class. Latin and algebra are nearly always taken up by them, even when they intend to leave school finally a year or eighteen months after passing Standard VI. Now, the little they learn in this time of either of these subjects can be of hardly any use to them, while the algebra is for the most part a repetition in a more general form of the long training they have already had in arithmetic. It would be better if pupils who do not intend to go forward to the higher schools did not take up either of these subjects, but devoted their time to advanced English, including the study of such a book as the English Composition in Dr. Smith's series, mensuration of plane surfaces (if boys), advanced drawing, elementary geometry, and some suitable course of lessons in science or domestic economy. The study of these subjects would undoubtedly profit them much more than does that of a little Latin or French or even a good deal of algebra. The case of pupils who mean to go forward to higher schools is different, and they might very well take both Latin and algebra. But on the whole, very few pupils in the class above Standard VI., except in a few schools in and around Dunedin, contemplate an advance to any higher educational institution.

In conclusion, we willingly bear testimony to the fidelity and zeal of the Board's teachers as a body. There are those who do not succeed in their work as well as we could desire, but even they labour with excellent intentions, and are rarely without the desire to improve.

We have, &c.,

D. PETRIE,
WM. TAYLOR, } Inspectors.
P. GOYEN,

The Chairman, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 20th March, 1891.

We have the honour to submit our general report on the schools in the Southland Education District for the year 1890.

WORK OF THE YEAR.—Of the 111 schools in operation at the end of the year, 105 had been open for twelve months or over, and each of these was examined in standards. Of the six new schools established during the year, only two were visited for examination—viz., those at Mataura Island and Flint's Bush. The others were of too recent erection to stand the test of a formal examination. It was found advisable to make a change in the date of the standard examination in the case of certain schools; and accordingly all the schools in Lake County, as well as those at Gordon and Ferndale, were visited twice. The total number of examination visits made during the year is thus 119. A large share of time outside of school hours had necessarily to be spent in the work of examining and valuing the papers handed in by the pupils, and in making out detailed reports for the information of the Board, Committees, and teachers.

The work of inspection has been fully overtaken. Ninety-eight unannounced visits were made, and an inspection report on each school was submitted to the Board. One or two schools in outlying districts were inspected and examined on the same day.

In addition to the time devoted to the examination and inspection of schools, no inconsiderable portion of the year was occupied in the preparation of standard test cards, in visiting new districts with a view to the establishment of additional schools, in preparing for and conducting the examination of pupil-teachers and scholarship candidates, in compiling official statistics, in writing special reports, in supervising the teachers' examination, and in attending to many other duties incidental to the inspectorate.

EXAMINATION RESULTS.—The following table exhibits at one view the examination statistics for the year :—