

agent would suggest. The play-ground is the place for character-development, and good games, inducing healthy rivalry, not only influence the tone and government of a school, but, being regulative in character, they encourage self-reliance among the children. During the time set aside for recess teachers ought to be in the play-ground with their pupils, as their presence tends to stave off listlessness and indifference among some, to excite emulation in others, and to benefit all.

Looking back at what was the condition of the schools a few years ago, and comparing it with what may be seen to-day, one feels that, whatever defect the present system of public education may have, there is in it a great power for good. In behaviour, in manners, in the manifestation of kindness toward each other and their elders, the children of to-day show through the dimness of the new development now going on that there is hope in the humanising and refining influences that are operating in the public schools. And these influences will become more and more effective as the governing authorities realise how largely the choice of good, temperate, and capable teachers can improve the whole tone and character of the schools, and give a right direction or disposition to the children who pass through them.

There were fifty-two pupil-teachers examined in December, and my report upon their work has already been submitted to the Board. In a number of cases the results are below fair, and it would be well if the places could be supplied by other teachers more competent. But, whilst expressing this opinion, I should like it to be understood that no class of workers in the schools toil as hard as the pupil-teachers. With lessons before ordinary school instruction begins, and hours of preparation in the evening, the position of a pupil-teacher is one of toil and anxiety. Some of them labour under serious disadvantages during the term of their engagement, and often their training is defective in some of the subjects now considered of importance in the preparation of standard pupils. For these reasons I should like to see classes formed in several centres for the instruction of the pupil-teachers on Saturdays in subjects like drawing, singing, science, language, and school-management. These subjects are of great importance, and every opportunity should be given to teachers to prepare them, as it is by this means that the country schools will be efficiently staffed in the future. The plan of instructing the pupil-teachers in special centres is now commonly adopted by the School Boards in England, and a neighbouring education district has lately adopted a similar plan.

The Gisborne District High School continues to make satisfactory progress. The senior pupils of the upper division passed the December matriculation examination of the University, and the work of the juniors of the same division is well done. Mr. Mann, B.A., is the master in charge of this portion of the Gisborne school.

I have, &c.,

H. HILL, B.A., F.G.S., Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

NELSON.

SIR,—

4th January, 1893.

I have the honour to submit to you my report on the public schools of this district for the year 1892.

Ninety-six schools were at work at the close of the year, several of them having been opened quite recently. The establishment of four more outlying schools has also been lately sanctioned by the Board. Ninety-three schools have been examined, eighty-one of which have also been paid separate visits of inspection. There were 5,830 names on the rolls of the schools when they were examined, 5,452 children being present. The state of the weather and the roads during a portion of the time when the examinations were going on will fully account for the unusually large number of absentees. The total number of scholars on the rolls at the end of the September quarter was 5,863.

Judged by every test that has been applied, the result of this year's examinations was, on the whole, creditable to our teachers. The children had evidently been carefully and intelligently trained; and, as a rule, gave one the impression of being bright and orderly. The numerical test, which is worth something, if not nearly so much as is too often claimed for it, shows that 88 per cent. of those who attempted standard work were able to satisfy the demands of the syllabus fairly well. The number of schools that did badly has diminished from twelve last year to eight at the last examinations.

It cannot be said that the interests of the outlying settlers are being neglected in this district. There are already twenty-four aided or household schools actually at work, and a few months will see a considerable addition to this number. From the geographical peculiarities of Nelson—abounding, as it does, in narrow glens and isolated bays, cut off from all communication even with schools that, so far as mere mileage goes, might be termed neighbouring—establishments containing a mere handful of children must somehow be maintained. The alternative is that some hundreds of children shall grow up untaught. Although the cost of educating each child under such conditions must, of necessity, far exceed the statutory grant of £3 15s., it is not easy to see how this difficulty is to be got over. Struggling settlers in outlying districts have seldom much spare cash to contribute, even for the education of their offspring. It is clear, however, that, if the larger schools are not to be starved, the day will arrive when the aided schools must become what their name imports, and be content with a simple grant-in-aid, instead of, as at present, a sum larger by 16s. a head than the allowance received by the Board from Government.

A short criticism of the way in which the several subjects included in the syllabus have been dealt with will not, it is to be hoped, be without its value:—

READING continues to receive that ample share of attention which so supremely important a subject deserves. The use of two reading-books for each class, so long recommended, has at last