

weakness, or indifference on the part of the teaching staff employed by the Board. The results arise solely from the operation of causes over which teachers and Committees have no control. The year has been a phenomenal one in the way of rainy days and sickness of various kinds. During the fifteen years I have travelled the district no similar year has been experienced, rainy days being the rule rather than the exception. The epidemic of measles began about the time of the midwinter holidays, and by the end of November it had spread over the whole of the school district. Of the 6,383 pupils belonging to the schools, nearly five thousand, or not less than 75 per cent. of them, were attacked by this complaint. In the Napier borough schools 1,289 children were affected out of 1,559 attending. In Gisborne 454 suffered, out of 667 attending. The Hastings School had a larger percentage of sufferers than either Gisborne or Napier, and in some districts the whole of the school population, with here and there an exception, was stricken down. Very few cases ended fatally, and parents did not appear to regard the disease as an infectious one, or as one to be avoided. At Makaretu, for example, only two pupils were reported as attending school who had not suffered from the epidemic, whilst not fewer than one-half of those present at the examination were imperfectly healed, although permitted to attend school and were examined by me. I noticed that one of the effects of the sickness upon the children was to make them mentally dull. In all schools the results were the same. They could not collect their thoughts, and were much slower than usual in all mental operation. To the credit of teachers and Committees it should be stated that most of the schools were carried on when a mere handful of children were in attendance, and when smaller salaries and allowances were looming ahead.

In previous years I have so fully pointed out defects in connection with the work of the schools that a few remarks will suffice at a time when teachers need encouragement rather than criticism. I would point out, however, that the larger schools must not be satisfied with the laurels they have gained in the past if they desire to maintain a high position among the schools of the district. The smaller schools are mostly staffed by young teachers who have been trained as pupil-teachers under the Board, and their work shows how well fitted they are for employment as principal teachers. Small schools like Wallingford, Wainui, Maharahara, Patangata, Matamau, and Tiniroto, are doing capital work, and each is managed by a teacher who has passed through one of the Board's schools as a pupil-teacher. A similar remark applies in the case of several assistant mistresses, and I notice with pleasure that some of the highest marks in the sewing examination were gained by schools where the assistant mistresses had been pupil-teachers. These examinations are carried on by number, and the examiners know nothing of either schools or pupils, so that there can be no mistake as to the quality of the work that is being done.

The number of children in the preparatory classes over the age of eight years is still large. More than 500 of those attending, or about 8 per cent. of the number belonging to the schools, are still to be found in the upper division of the infant classes. Napier, with 1,247 pupils, had 109 in the preparatory classes who were over eight years of age; Gisborne, with 667 pupils, had forty-one such children; and Woodville, with an attendance of 336, had thirty-two. Several schools had no children in the preparatory classes over eight years old, whilst the school at Maraetaha had 40 per cent. of such children in attendance. In the latter case, however, the children were either Maoris or half-castes, and they do not usually attend school at an early age. The same causes are assigned for the non-presentation of so many children as were stated by me last year. Bad health, natural dulness, irregular attendance, late admission, and inability of parents to provide boots or necessary clothing are entered in the returns with dull monotony. These reasons may be sufficient; but it appears to me that the indifference of parents has much to do with this low classification, and until there is some real form of compulsion, little or no improvement may be expected in this direction. The Napier School Committee have endeavoured to improve the attendance by the help of the law, but parents who are so negligent, as many appear to be, require something more drastic than a nominal fine in order to make them realise what they owe to their children's future and to their country.

The infant or preparatory classes have been sadly hindered during the late sickness. Many of the teachers have tried to do too much work under unfavourable conditions, and this has not produced satisfactory results. With half a year's attendance the usual syllabus of instruction could not be prepared; but due allowances have been made, in the hope that by judicious and systematic work the old standard will be reached another year. In a number of the larger infant departments a new supply of kindergarten appliances (gifts 1, 2, 3) is required, and it would be well if more encouragement were given to the lady teachers to make their rooms more attractive and suitable for the special training of young children.

The methods of instruction employed for the preparation of some of the standard subjects do not satisfy me. In arithmetic, for example, more oral instruction should be given, dealing with principles and reasons why. Many of the defects in the higher classes are the outcome of imperfect, or too hurried, preparation in the lower standards. Children should be made familiar with the use of the terms "sum," "product," "difference," "divisor," and "quotient" as early as possible, and they should have the fact strongly impressed on their minds that whatever answer is required in arithmetic something like it, either more or less, is stated in the question. In some schools there is a tendency to curtail processes without showing children the reason for so doing. In the earlier standards details are essential in the preparation of arithmetic, and abbreviations or "short cuts" should only be allowed after details have been fully mastered. Mental arithmetic is receiving more attention, and wherever this subject is well taught the work in ordinary arithmetic is satisfactory. This was very pronounced in the recent examination for scholarships, as all candidates, without exception, who gained good marks in mental tests stood highest on the list in this subject.

The methods adopted in a number of schools during a dictation lesson are bad. Three or four words are given out by the teacher, and they are repeated again and again in the most foolish way, as if children had no memory. Imagine a conversation carried on in this way, each person