

“Elements of Agriculture,” prepared by Dr. Fream, and published under the auspices of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. For its size it is wonderfully cheap, and it contains an admirable series of drawings of plants of economic value, as well as of most of the weeds, insect-pests, &c., with which the farmers of the future should be made familiar. It is not, however, a work in any way suitable for school children, though lads who are leaving school for farming pursuits would find it of the greatest use for their future calling.

Owing to a delay of a few weeks in beginning the usual examinations of the public schools of the district, we were not able to overtake the examination of the higher work of the district high schools, on which we are therefore unable to present a special report as in previous years.

We have, &c.,

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

The Secretary, Education Board, Otago.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 12th March, 1894.

We have the honour to submit our annual report for the year ended 31st December, 1893. In view of probable changes in the syllabus of examination we do not venture to indicate fresh lines of procedure for the coming year, nor can we safely generalise to any great extent on the data afforded by the results of the past year, these having been rendered uncertain by the measles epidemic as a disturbing factor. Our notes will accordingly be very brief.

All the schools were inspected except four, which we found closed on account of sickness; all were also examined, twelve of them, indeed, twice. The purpose of this last step was to transfer the entire work of examination to the latter part of the year. By this arrangement five or six clear months will intervene between the Christmas holidays and the annual examinations. The earlier part of the year will be given to inspection and to the other work appertaining to the Inspector's department.

Referring in few words to the work being done in the schools, we note the continued improvement in the management of infant classes and departments. The grants made from time to time by the Board for the better equipment of these have thus been fully justified.

In the standard classes, however, we have seen but little indication of improvement on the work of last year. Indeed, ground then gained has, we fear, in some instances been lost. Flows and ebbs of mental energy are not peculiar to the teaching profession, so that a backward tendency on the part of some teachers, though matter for regret, is hardly matter for surprise. The intellectual lethargy here hinted at betrays itself in various ways. For example, there are in some of our schools teachers who attempt to teach arithmetic by plying their pupils with an endless series of test cards, all heedless of the fact that an intelligent mastery of a single principle is worth a host of mere details. In the science lessons, again, this mental sloth becomes still more apparent. Here suitable specimens and apparatus are so often completely wanting that the instruction is, in many schools, in danger of becoming entirely futile. True, these indispensable adjuncts are found in a considerable number of schools; equally true, however, they are totally absent from the great majority. This reproach could be taken away in most cases by but little effort on the teacher's part; the homeliest collection and the rudest apparatus are by no means the least effective. Another example of the disposition to which we are referring is furnished by geography. The physical part of this subject, though perhaps the most entertaining branch of the primary-school course, has been kept steadily out of view by too many teachers. This is all the more surprising when it is remembered that this branch is not only of great practical importance but also carries the pupils' minds far beyond the limits of the class-room, feasting their imaginations with richly-coloured pictures from nature's matchless gallery.

From the minor we pass for the moment to the major key. A large number of the Board's teachers are doing yeoman service, increasing year by year their practical skill and moral influence. A power for good not only in their own, but also in adjacent schools, such may truly be called the salt of the teaching profession.

The summary of the results for the whole district shows that in the year to which this report refers a relatively smaller number of pupils passed in the standard classes than in the previous year, and also that the marks awarded for class and additional subjects are somewhat lower. On the other hand, it shows that the average age of passing the various standards by the pupils is lower by two months in 1893 than in 1892.

As compared with the year 1892 a smaller number of pupils over eight years of age was withheld from examination in Standard I. In nearly every instance where pupils were so withheld the teacher furnished a satisfactory excuse.

Appended is the usual summary of results for each school. [Not reprinted.]

We are, &c.,

JAMES HENDRY, }
GEO. D. BRAIK, } Inspectors.

The Secretary, Education Board, Invercargill.