

"illness," 2. No reason was given in eight cases, and the same may be said of eight others who were described as "unfit"; and seven at another school were "to be promoted" at some future time. At the school with the largest proportion of children below Standard I. there were only three above eight years, but several had been nearly three years at school, and ought to have been ready for presentation in Class I. No reason was offered in these cases.

The number of small (household) schools added to the list this year more than comes up to the average of the last five years; and there is no doubt that this rate of increase will be maintained for several years to come. It is therefore to be hoped that the appeal shortly to be made to the Government by the smaller districts may result in some arrangement by which this very useful class of schools may be provided for without the necessity for crippling the operations of the Boards in other directions.

All the Board schools received visits of inspection during the past year, and the inspection reports were laid before you. The proposal made in my last report to provide for the regular inspection of the Sounds schools was adopted by your Board, and many of these schools were visited accordingly, the results of such visits being duly reported. Last year, however, the time available for the work was rather unsuitable, as many of the schools were closed for the midwinter holidays, thus rendering my visits fruitless. This fact caused the expense of the trip to be less than it would have been if every school had been in working order at the time, as in that case the round trip would have occupied at least twice as much time, and have been correspondingly costly. The regular inspection of these small and remote schools is quite as necessary as it is with the nearer and larger ones, which, moreover, can be visited, if necessary, at any time and in any weather. I therefore venture to hope that the Board will make suitable and adequate provision for the continuation of the work in the future.

The results of the examinations have been, on the whole, very satisfactory, only four schools having failed to any serious extent. As regards the efficiency of most of the small aided schools, the opinion I formerly expressed has been once more confirmed, as nearly all of them are doing valuable work as far as they have hitherto gone, whilst at some of them the results are in no way inferior to the best obtained in the district. Two prizes given through a member of your Board (J. A. Lambert, Esq.) for the best paper on political economy were both gained by scholars from one of these little schools.

The treatment of the pass-subjects this year shows an improvement all round, varying from 4 per cent. in drawing and arithmetic to 9 per cent. in geography, the last, with arithmetic, being, as usual, the least satisfactory of the pass-subjects. Comparing my own report for 1894 with the reports of other Inspectors for the same year, I find that in six other districts geography was pronounced to be more or less unsatisfactory—especially physical geography. These districts were Auckland, Taranaki, Wanganui, Nelson, Otago, and Southland.

*Reading* appears to be fairly well taught in most of our schools, but, as in no school is there more than one reading-book used, the contents of which are, in the lower classes, almost "known by heart," the results must be considerably discounted. It is now, I think, about two years since the Education Department first expressed an intention of providing a set of reading-books for New Zealand schools, and on that account the introduction of another reading-book for this district was from time to time postponed. It is now, however, evident that the Board must take independent action if our schools are to be furnished with a second set of suitable readers. The book that has at last been issued by the department is no doubt a very interesting compilation, but (with the exception of a few chapters) as regards its fitness for its intended purpose there is much room for argument. But, were it ever so good a book, it only professes to be suitable for the Fifth and Sixth Standards, whilst the lower classes, in which the want of additional reading matter is most pressing, are still unprovided for. Seeing the number of admirable books published by such firms as Blackwood, Chambers, Macmillan, Nelson, and others, it seems to be a "work of supererogation" to attempt to provide locally what can already be obtained of better quality and at less expense from any one of the publishers mentioned. As far as reading is concerned, the requirements of the British codes are practically the same as those of the New Zealand syllabus. The occasional references in the English books to circumstances which are changed or reversed on this side of the equator, so far from being objectionable, are, in my opinion, a positive advantage, as supplying the intelligent teacher with an additional motive for a careful explanation of the principles of physical and mathematical geography and other matters. But, whether obtained from Wellington or elsewhere, the great obstacle to the introduction of a second reading-book still remains the same—and that is, the question of cost, and by whom it must be borne. To supply each school with a complete set of books gratuitously would be the easiest method if the funds of the Board will permit. I estimate that, allowing one copy for the use of every child on the school-rolls, the expense of furnishing the necessary books would be £100. Such books (kept, of course, in the school) should last with ordinary care for at least five years; so that the annual cost would be about £20, or possibly even less, as many parents might be willing to provide their children with such books, thus proportionately reducing the number to be supplied gratuitously.

With regard to the methods of teaching this subject, as observed at the inspection visits, there is, in the majority of the schools, little or nothing to be desired. Simultaneous reading might with advantage be more generally adopted in large classes, as without it the scholars can scarcely be given sufficient practice in the limited time available for the purpose.

*Writing*, as shown in the copy-books, is generally good, and in some schools really admirable. The practical application of the subject to the written work of the examination (after making due allowance for the limited time available) seldom realises the expectations raised by the appearance of the copy-books; and this seems to bear out the complaint so frequently made by business men as to the indifferent handwriting of lads engaged from our public schools. Although I have no faith in any particular system of teaching writing, having met with the most admirable, as well as most