

Sewing continues to be taught with excellent success by most of the lady teachers, but complaint is often made that the demands are too great upon the senior girls. I cannot but think that the subject is too important to relegate to a secondary position in the school course, and, indeed, the sewing-hour may be made a pleasant kind of relaxation for the girls under judicious management.

The prizes formerly given by the Hon. Captain Russell for practical work in mending have certainly had a beneficial effect upon the schools in this district, and have given a bias to many teachers in selecting practical work for their pupils. I am not inclined to suggest that the time now given to this important subject should be lessened, although work of a more practical kind might be allowed at the choice of the lady teachers. In the recent examinations many schools gained the mark "Excellent" for the work sent in, and the Napier School received special commendation from the examiner for the excellent work in cutting out and dressmaking which had been taught by a lady specially paid and appointed by the Committee. The step taken in this direction is an important one, and I look forward to the time when other schools will follow the example set by the Napier Committee. Gisborne adopted the plan of machine-instruction and cutting-out for the girls several years ago, and reports by independent lady examiners show that a high standard of excellence continues to be maintained. Little or nothing has been done in the way of practical science except at Gisborne, where an interesting experiment has lately been made. A practical cookery-class has been tried under the management of a lady who is employed when the classes are in session by the Auckland Technical Association. Fortunately, I was in the Poverty Bay district when the classes were in progress, and on three occasions I visited them in company with the Chairman of the School Committee, who has ever been active in extending this form of training in the school. I was impressed with the high value of the work done, and the report of the Committee shows that the classes were very popular, and the excess of income over expenditure will enable the Committee to widen the scope of their work during the coming year. No other school under the Board has carried technical instruction so far, but there is a spirit working among Committees that bodes well for the future. Perhaps the slow growth of this form of school training in its initial stages will prove best in the end, but I look forward to the time when much more practical work will be done in the schools than is now attempted. It may be wise to move slowly, but one cannot look over the educational fields of Europe and America without feeling that much more practical views are current as to what the schools ought to pursue in the way of training, and I am satisfied as to the possibility of regenerating the schools here in the direction of making them more practical and adaptive as stepping-stones into life for those who attend them.

Teachers.—I have ventured to direct attention to the need of some special training for the benefit of the pupil-teachers. This course is necessary if the efficiency of the schools is to be maintained. My own opinion is going against the employment of pupil-teachers as a class. With the examinations now open it is possible for young persons who wish to enter the profession as teachers to sit for examination in January, and some of the pupil-teachers are adopting this course. Thus, a pupil-teacher of the first year may hold a certificate of competency from the Department of Education, in Class E or D, and is yet required to come up for examination under the Board's regulations.

By a payment to young persons, based upon the average annual salary now paid to the pupil-teachers during the course of their training, a sufficient salary would be offered to attract people into the profession who would be older and much better qualified than the majority of candidates who now seek for employment.

The question is one of considerable importance in its bearing upon the future efficiency of the schools.

Gisborne District High School.—The higher classes of the Gisborne District High School continue to be carried on with creditable success. In the December examination five of the pupils matriculated, and those in the lower division acquitted themselves well in the special examination held for their benefit. A detailed report on the work has been already submitted to the Board. It will thus be seen that, on the whole, the year's work shows good and advancing progress. Defects have been pointed out and remedies suggested, and now that the schools labour under so few disadvantages as compared with what were common a few years ago it may be expected that higher ideals will be set up by all who are engaged in the work of education. The ideals may not be reached, but every teacher of young children may well be encouraged by the words of the late Lord Beaconsfield when he says, "No man ever rises to greatness in this world who does not aim at objects beyond his reach."

Conclusion.—I cannot close this report without giving expression to my deep regret at your proposed retirement as Chairman and member of the Education Board. Nineteen years and a half form no small part in the span of one's life, and during the whole of that time it has been my pleasure and privilege to report year by year to you as Chairman upon the progress of education in this district. When this report was begun I was unaware of your intended retirement, but the facts given will serve to show what has been done in this education district under your direction during your long term of duty as the Board's Chairman. Throughout the whole period I do not remember a single occasion when I received from you anything but kindness and encouragement, and to me it is gratifying that this opportunity is given of offering you publicly my best thanks and dutiful regards.

I have, &c.,

H. HILL,

Inspector of Schools.

Hon. J. D. Ormond, M.L.C.,
Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Blenheim, 12th January, 1898.

I have the honour to submit my seventh annual report on the schools under the control of your Board.

There have been sixty-four schools at work in the district during the year. Of these, eleven