

only right by chance." No doubt practice gives increased skill, or, rather, affords the opportunity for acquiring increased skill; but practice alone will not make a skilful teacher: the training must be there, and this can be best controlled during apprenticeship. The ordeal through which the pupil-teachers have to pass in this practical work is a very trying one, but with their training as a foundation, and with increasing experience and the constant reading of the educational literature of the day, the quality of education should be improved. But I am afraid few read such literature after their training ceases, and that most discontinue educational study, though not literary study, after the certificate examination has been passed. In some cases, at any rate, I am satisfied they would continue it had they the opportunity, but to teachers with small salaries the cost is a great consideration even if they know what books to procure. If, however, the Teachers' Institute, with the assistance of the Board, established at the Board's office a small library of the best works on education, some earnest teachers would avail themselves of the privilege of reading the results of the labour, thought, and experience of great educators.

But to return to the subject of cram. I think that one fact alone tends to redeem us from a general charge, and that is the uniform excellence of the oral answering, or the skill with which the whole of the instruction is made to partake of the nature of conversation lessons between the teacher and the pupils. The pupil talks with his teacher instead of briefly answering questions. Hurried and superficial work is avoided, for to answer fully the pupil must understand the question. A solid foundation is laid, and many of the benefits referred to in previous reports follow. This I consider one of the best features in our schools, and the brightness and eagerness displayed by the pupils in answering in the oral work is, as a rule, favourably reported upon as "alacrity in oral work."

It has been often remarked that in dairying districts children of the tenderest years are required to undergo fatigue far beyond their strength. Epithets such as "white slavery" have been freely used, but if we take a less superficial view of present conditions, and recognise that a certain amount of hardship is inseparable from a pioneer life, I doubt if the prospect is not brighter than a casual glance reveals. Indeed, dairying has displaced a greater evil—poverty with its sordid attendants. Before it was well developed and established as a permanent industry the children had to work quite as hard for a less return. The small farmer's struggle for existence was of the keenest, the efforts of the whole family providing scarcely the barest necessities of life, and the children, being required during the day, were unable to attend school regularly. Now, in winter little milking is done, but in summer-time the children get up early and go to bed early, they go to school more regularly, and greatly participate in the results of their labours. They are better nourished and better clad, their homes are larger and more comfortable, and the general conditions under which they live are vastly improved. Again, labour is employed more than formerly, for parents are not now so dependent upon their children. I am not maintaining that all parents are influenced by the highest motives for the welfare of their offspring, nor is it fair to assume, as some appear to do, that all are utterly neglectful. The dispositions of the parents rather than the conditions of life are responsible for excessive hardship, and this is equally true for all classes of the community. We are, I believe, now experiencing a phase of transition leading to the time when, through the further development of machinery and of the industry generally, child-labour, or that necessity for child-labour in its worst form which all deplore, will be a thing of the past. Indeed, the examination statistics tend to support, though they may not conclusively prove, what I assert. Yearly more and more pupils reach the highest standards, and while there attend more regularly. In the last six years the number of pupils who have passed Standard VI. has increased 270 per cent., and the number passing Standard V. has increased 220 per cent. These figures rather startle one, and, though the increase may be the resultant of a number of factors, I believe that the improved conditions have induced on the part of parents a greater interest in the welfare of their children, and have enabled them to give effect to it. In the interests of the children, as well as in the interests of public health, legislation should, however, insure that the milking is carried on under proper sanitary conditions, and that the surroundings of the children are less degrading than are sometimes found. The yards should be properly constructed, and shelter sufficient for the milkers during inclement weather should be provided, for this is where the real hardship occurs.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.

W. E. SPENCER, M.A., B.Sc.,
Inspector of Schools.

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Board of Education Office, Wanganui, 1st February, 1901.

I have the honour to submit the report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending 31st December, 1900. Owing to the resignation of Mr. Vereker-Bindon, the Chief Inspector, who left the Board's service towards the close of the year, my remarks on the several topics will necessarily be brief.

Pupil-teachers.—The examination of pupil-teachers was held in Wanganui during the mid-winter holidays. The following is a summary of the results: First class (third year)—examined, 18; passed, 17; failed, 1. Second class (second year)—examined, 20; passed, 15; failed, 5. Third class (first year)—examined, 21; passed, 16; failed, 5.

The number examined, when compared with that of the previous year, shows a decrease of twenty-two. The appointments to the office of pupil-teacher have during the past year been fewer than formerly, owing to the large number at present in the Board's service who have completed