

district high schools, and nothing that has been urged against it has convinced us that we are wrong in our contention. At the end of 1902 there were 170 pupils in the city and suburban schools, and at midwinter of 1903, when these schools were examined, there were 109. It would seem, therefore, that the Department's scheme for continuing the education of those whose parents wish them to remain at school after passing S6 does not meet the needs of the city and suburbs. We discussed this question in our last report, and need not say here what we said there. We are still of opinion that the educational machinery of Dunedin should not be inferior to that of country towns.

We have, &c.,

P. GOYEN,	} Inspectors.
W. S. FITZGERALD,	
C. R. RICHARDSON,	
C. R. BOSSENCE,	

The Secretary, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 1st March, 1904.

We have the honour to submit our report for the year ended the 31st December, 1903.

During the year we accomplished the usual tale of examinations and inspections. The quality of the work done by the pupils did not vary greatly from that done in previous years, nor was there any very striking development in the methods and management of the teachers. We believe that we are within the limits of truth when we say that the teachers, almost without exception, are zealous in the discharge of their duties, and exemplary in their lives and conduct; and we do not hesitate to add that no section of the community bears stouter hearts under adverse circumstances. It is lamentable to reflect that the teachers—especially the male teachers—of the lower-grade schools are so inadequately requited for their labour. In such schools young men may do well for themselves, but there is to be considered the case of men of middle age, and of men approaching the period of the "sere and yellow leaf." From their present income these men can derive little beyond the bare necessities of life. Some of them by self-sacrifice little short of heroic keep an insurance policy in force; but others—if the truth must be told—walk continually under the shadow of stark poverty. It is, indeed, time that the country should become alive to its responsibilities in this matter.

But to proceed to subjects less sombre. We first glance retrospectively at one or two features of the past year's school-work.

The remarks we made on the subject of handwriting last year bore considerable fruit. In a number of schools the standard of proficiency rose perceptibly, while in others more attention was paid to the subject. The foundation of handwriting, as is the case in every other school subject, is laid in the lower classes, but unfortunately the foundation is sometimes of the worst possible description, and as a consequence the superstructure totally fails to command admiration for uniformity or elegance.

The upper-class pupils were not conspicuously successful in their handling of the Department's test-cards in arithmetic. We incline to think, however, that the failures were in some measure due to the fact that the tests were somewhat more difficult than those set in previous years. It is, to say the least, unfortunate that increased difficulty in arithmetical tests should have coincided with an extension of handwork in the schools. Increased attention to one department of study, in schools where good methods prevail, can be given only at the expense of some other department, and teachers taking up handwork very naturally took exception to the stiffening of the tests in arithmetic.

Physical exercises and military drill have been much in evidence among us during the year. Mr. Hanna's work in the schools is beginning to tell on the carriage and discipline of the pupils. Cadet corps have been started in connection with the three town schools, and battalion parades have been held. We hope to be able in our next report to chronicle a further extension of the cadet movement in the district.

Having said this much about school-work, we may refer, in passing, to the work done by the teachers at the special classes organized last winter. The Board has already indicated its appreciation of the application and the zeal of the students, so many of whom by their success at the City and Guilds of London Institute Examinations reflected credit on themselves and on their teachers. Classes in cookery and woodwork will again be organized, and in order that the available time may be utilised to the best advantage classes in science will also, we hope, be established. It is eminently to be desired that the teachers who were successful at the recent examinations will not allow their skill and knowledge to remain unused, but will endeavour to give their pupils and the community the benefit of their special training.

There is one phase in the work of education in this district that cannot be too seriously considered. We refer to the dearth of competent teachers for the smaller schools, which, of course, are numerous. The outlook in this respect is distinctly gloomy. Nor can we take much comfort from the fact that several pupil-teachers finish their course annually; for these, instead of proceeding to the Training College, will naturally step into vacancies which there is no one else to fill. The remedy, we believe, lies in the total abolition of the pupil-teacher system, which is at best an anomaly and at worst, to put it mildly, a sheer obstruction. If we were in a position to send for a few years a dozen or so of our brightest secondary pupils to take a course in the Training College the difficulty would vanish. As the matter stands we are going from bad to worse. It is the very