

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Education Office, Blenheim, 26th January, 1907.

I have the honour to present my third general report.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.—At the close of 1905 there were sixty-six schools on the list. The number had increased at the close of 1906 to seventy-seven. Those at North Bank, Grassmere, Ward, and Sea View are new buildings erected in the midst of recent settlements, due to the subdivision of large estates. The Blenheim schools were amalgamated early in the year, and the school so formed is working in departments.

INSPECTION.—Seventy-three visits of inspection were made during the year. In nine instances there were slight inaccuracies in the registers which appeared in no case to be wilful, yet which again call for notation. It is necessary that the time-table should accurately reflect the school-work; several times in small schools the time-table of the previous year was exposed, although some of the standards had disappeared and considerable changes had occurred in the time allowed to such subjects as geography and history. Committees are requested to see that the clocks in the schools are kept in good working-order. At inspection a considerable portion of the time was spent in showing practically how, by means of correlation, time might be saved without detriment to the work and even with advancement. The schools in the northern region during 1905, and those in the southern region during 1906, have been much improved by painting and repair, so that it may be hoped there will be some funds released for the provision of more modern furniture. The gallery in the infant division at Blenheim School has been removed, with a view to substituting dual desks. A number of schools, having been painted in the interior, present a much more pleasant and attractive appearance. Additional accommodation is urgently required at Marlboroughtown and Spring Creek, where in each case increased attendance has led to an increase of the staff. The capitation grants under the manual and technical system are gradually enriching the larger schools in apparatus. The teachers are permitted to spend a limited amount of these grants on books that assist them in dealing with handwork. In this way valuable reference libraries should in course of time be formed. The schools would benefit if some of the moneys devoted to libraries were spent in purchasing single copies of arithmetic showing short methods, of commercial geographies—such as that lately issued by Blackie (Rev. F. Smith)—of books on nature study and agriculture. The teacher's slender stipend cannot be expected to keep him abreast of these without assistance. Belgium has, at various centres, libraries established by the State for the use of teachers; correspondence between teachers and the librarian is franked, and also the sending and return of books. Belgium knows that the root of the matter is the teacher.

EXAMINATION.—Sixty-nine public schools and five private schools were examined. The total enrolment at private schools was 169, and 158 pupils were present at examination. The number on the rolls in public schools at times of examination was 2,030, and the number present at examination 1,925.

The increase in the roll for the year is 117. This is due partly to the subdivision of large estates, and partly to an increase of the population—an increment so diffused as to cause the opening of a considerable number of small schools.

At thirty-five schools all the pupils attended for examination, the largest being Grovetown, with 114 pupils.

The following schools of Grade 1 and upwards attained 90 per cent. of attendance for the year: Marlborough Town, 96 per cent.; Onamalutu, 94 per cent.; Waitaria Bay, 92 per cent.; Okaramio, 91 per cent.; Havelock, 90 per cent. Only Seddon (78 per cent.) fell below 80 per cent. It is worthy of note that the city schools of Otago all record over 90 per cent., indeed the whole province last year reached 89 per cent., yet the Blenheim School stands at 81 per cent. A community is justly proud when its schools maintain a high standard. The parents will best strengthen the teachers' hands by seeing that their children are regularly present for instruction. There appears to have been comparatively little sickness during the year, and the weather was favourable for a good attendance. Though not altogether reliable as a sole index, owing to epidemics, &c., I think it may fairly be assumed when a school shows 90 per cent. of attendance that the pupils are being trained in regular habits, that they like their school, that discipline is not weak, and that in this the Inspector has some sort of criterion by which to catch some of the elusive elements that examination on conventional lines does not reach. According to the latest report of the Commissioner of Education in the United States, each and every division of the German Empire (in Europe) records 90 per cent. This covers an enrolment of 9,256,731 children. New Zealand's attainment of 83.9 per cent. (1903) appears in the same table to our disadvantage. Andrew Carnegie, speaking on the liberation of slaves in America and the necessity for educating them, says "He only is free whom education makes free." There are fathers who, by undervaluing the opportunities of childhood, are preparing shackles for the feet of their sons and yokes for their shoulders.

Summary of the Truant Officer's report: Forty-five informations, three dismissed, one withdrawn, forty-one convictions. Fines, £4 10s.; costs (twenty-five cases), £8 15s.

The roll-number of Standard VI was 175, and of these 168 were present. Certificates of proficiency were awarded to fifty-seven, and certificates of competency to thirty-eight pupils. The smaller number of certificates of proficiency is due to the change in the regulations under which the minimum mark was raised. The total number of certificates is reduced, because under the former regulations some gained the proficiency that would not have gained the competency certificate. In private schools eight certificates of proficiency and ten certificates of competency were awarded. The total number of Standard VI certificates awarded in the public and private schools of Marlborough during the past three years was 116, 127, and 113 respectively. Subject to an age-limit the proficiency certificate carries free education at a high school. Now, however, that the minimum has been raised for proficiency, I think