

It will thus be seen that the carrying into effect of the first three of the provisions would not only remove the chief causes which had led to Mrs. Burn's resignation, but would also enable her to undertake the sole control of both departments of the school. This arrangement appears to offer a fair prospect of success, and to impose upon the Lady Principal duties not too onerous for one person.

The Commissioners are satisfied that the work originally undertaken by Mrs. Burn was too much for any one individual, and caused an over-straining of the energies, both mental and physical, such as could hardly be continued permanently. On the other hand, with the boarding and teaching departments under one roof, the discipline appears more likely to be maintained under an undivided authority than under two heads.

The Commissioners are therefore of opinion that, inasmuch as some change is inevitable, the arrangements proposed by the Board, in its main features, is the only one, under existing circumstances, that can effectually meet the emergency which has arisen.

Under a different phase of circumstances possibly it might be found beneficial to adopt the principle which, based on enlarged experience and enlightened culture, is gaining ground at Home, of having boarding establishments entirely apart from the school and presided over by lady superintendents appointed by the governing body. The advantages of this system are fully described in Miss Dalrymple's evidence.

The Commissioners, however, think that the system now established, or rather proposed to be established, apart from any consideration as to the persons who are to work it out, offers a reasonable expectation of permanence, and will thus obviate one great evil complained of—the necessity for radical changes in the future.

With regard to the condition of the High Schools, the Commissioners find that in both the number of pupils has fallen off very considerably within the last twelve months, for, whereas in the Boys' School the number had risen during 1876 from 159 to 194, they have, since December of that year to the present time, fallen from 194 to 174. In the Girls' School the highest number during 1876 was 195, while at the date of the Commissioners' visit the number was 148. This falling off, it is stated, may partly be accounted for by illness among the pupils, and, in the case of the Girls' School, is said to be attributable to Mrs. Burn's resignation. Still, in the opinion of the Commissioners, these causes do not account entirely for the whole of the loss. A similar falling off has taken place in the resident boarders, more particularly in the Girls' Department, where, from 28 in 1876, they have been reduced to 13. It is necessary to state this fact, but without drawing from it any inference to the prejudice of the teachers. On the contrary, the Commissioners believe that the work of the schools is being very efficiently performed.

So far as regards the Girls' School, the public generally appears to be contented with the results obtained in the teaching, and the Commissioners have been able to ascertain that a large number of the pupils who have passed through the school have done credit to their teachers in after life.

The buildings and accommodation, though not altogether large enough for the numbers in attendance, are not badly adapted for the work of the school. If the Boys' School were removed and the whole building devoted to the purposes of the Girls' School, the accommodation would be ample.

Here the Commissioners desire to draw your Excellency's special attention to a matter of most serious importance, and one which should be attended to with no unavoidable delay. In going over these buildings, a portion of which is used as the sleeping apartments for the girls, we were much struck with the length, narrowness, and intricacy of the passages from one part of the building to the other. It occurred to us that, should a fire break out while the girls were in their bedrooms, or, indeed, in any of the rooms not in the immediate neighbourhood of the entrance hall, the consequences might be most lamentable, and the loss of life very great, owing to the difficulty which the inmates would experience in threading their way through the passages, probably in a suffocating smoke, before they would be able to extricate themselves. We recommend that, if no better plan can be devised for removing this source of danger, a proper system of fire escapes should be provided, so as to give a more speedy egress than the entrance door, in the case supposed, would afford.

The building used for the purposes of the boys' day-school stands immediately adjoining the girls' boarding-house and day-school, or, rather the two establishments are in one and the same building, only divided from each other by a partition inside and a high fence outside. The two together are hardly sufficiently commodious for both, but would be admirably adapted for the Girls' School and boarding-house.

There is one very noticeable feature in connexion with the composition of the Boys' School. It is this: The great majority of the boys who attend it are those belonging to the lower forms, and learning elementary subjects. The upper school is supposed to consist of three forms, the sixth, the fifth, and fourth forms; but of these the sixth is altogether wanting, and out of a total of 174 boys there are only 20 in the fifth and fourth forms—6 boys in the fifth form and 14 in the fourth form. Even these are not doing very advanced work. The remaining 154 boys belong to the lower school, and the work which they are doing is not much, if at all, higher than that which is done in the better class district schools.

We have examined a return showing the number of boys attending the school in 1873, and their distribution into forms, and we find, on a comparison of the numbers there given with those at present in the school, that the highest standard then reached was much higher than it is now. At that time the total number of boys on the roll was 103; of these there were 36 in what then corresponded to the present upper school, or a little more than one-third, of whom 4 were in the sixth form, whereas, at the present time, there is no sixth form, and the number of boys in the upper school is a little more than one-ninth of the whole school.

It is said that one advantage of having a large number of boys in the lower classes is that, inasmuch as the fees paid by them more than cover the expenses of this part of the school, the surplus thus obtained goes to reduce the deficiency in the upper school. The fact, however, remains, that the school affords a high class education to a very small proportion of those who attend.