

This preponderance of boys engaged in elementary studies, and the small proportion under instruction in higher subjects, is attributed, by those whom the Commissioners have questioned, to a variety of causes. The general opinion, with which the Commissioners are inclined to agree, appears to be that the early age at which students are admitted to the classes in the University of Otago induces those who wish to proceed to a higher course of study to obtain their instruction at that institution, and thus that many of those who would in former times have remained at the High School, now pursue their studies at that University. It is said that one great inducement to do this is that, as many of the University classes are held in the morning and in the evening, or at times which do not interfere with business, those who wish to enter employment may do so, and yet not give up their studies.

Besides this, it is alleged that the establishment of grammar schools in various parts of the country, which are supposed to give nearly, if not quite, as good an education as that obtained in the High School, prevents many from attending who would otherwise probably do so.

It is right to state, however, that Dr. Stuart, whose opinions are entitled to the highest respect, does not agree with the above view. He thinks that the High School should not be considered and does not, in fact, act as a feeder to the University. His opinion is, that the two work, and ought to work, independently of each other. In Scotland, as he states, one-half of the students at the universities come from the country, and have had no opportunities of attending other than parish schools. But these parish schools, in many cases, are under masters who have graduated at the universities, and are thus capable of giving to their scholars a liberal education. The parish schools, he says, feed the Scotch universities, and he thinks that we should look to the same source here. The High School, in his opinion, should only aim at giving a good school education, apart from the ulterior object of preparing young men for the University.

Mr. George Bell, Chairman of the Dunedin School Committee, in the letter attached to this report, dated 24th October, 1877, on the other hand, suggests that the district schools should act as educational feeders to the High School, which in its turn should train its students for the University; and the same text books and class of instruction, leading up to this result, should be adopted by all the district schools. This suggestion presents matter for serious consideration, for it appears, as a matter of fact, that the High School is, so to say, overlapped in its teaching at both ends—by the Grammar and District Schools from below and by the University from above.

The present site of the Boys' School is another disadvantage under which it labours. There is no provision worthy of the name for a playground for the boys when out of school, and the consequence is that, when not occupied by their lessons, they lounge about, without having anything to interest or amuse them. It is hardly to be expected that they can, under such wearying influences, acquire a liking for the school, or feel any pride or pleasure in connection with it.

We could not help observing that the masters seem to think that after they have done their teaching work in the classes all their duties are accomplished, and that they have nothing further to do with the boys. We think that the intercourse between the boys and the masters should not end here, and that, if the masters mixed more with the boys and showed themselves interested in their pleasures and amusements, as well as in their school work, they would, supposing them to be men of refined minds, exercise an influence for good which could not fail to have a beneficial effect.

There is one hour in the middle of the day allowed for luncheon and relaxation. The boys, during this interval, are left entirely to themselves. They may do what they like, and go where they like. It seems very desirable that some order and regularity should be observed, and we think that this would be promoted if a regular luncheon were prepared, at a trifling cost, by the caretaker of the establishment, or some other suitable person, and that the boys should sit down to a decent table. It might also be arranged that one of the masters should be on the spot with the boys when out of school.

These matters may appear of trivial importance in themselves, but we cannot help thinking that trifles such as these have much to do with the tone of the school, and that the observance of some decorum conduces greatly to that sense of propriety and good feeling which, judging from the evidence on this point, appears to be wanting. While on this point the Commissioners may mention that, though it might not be considered an essential part of their instructions under the Commission, they considered it advisable to visit the Dunedin Normal School, under the control of Mr. W. Fitzgerald, and were much struck by the discipline and demeanour of the boys and girls at this establishment, in recording their appreciation of which they have no doubt that the pleasure and satisfaction they experienced in visiting an educational institution so ably conducted is shared by the parents whose children possess the advantage of Mr. Fitzgerald's instruction and supervision.

Proceeding from the internal arrangements to the question of outside control and management, it will be seen from what has been said above that the present system is, for many reasons, defective.

In the first place there is no such thing as a regular periodical inspection, and consequently faults in the organization and teaching very rarely come to the ears of those intrusted with the duty of supervision otherwise than by common rumour.

There is one difficulty in the way of thorough inspection, at least of that part of it which consists in examination. The variety of subjects taught and the high standard attained, or proposed to be attained, in these subjects by the upper school renders it necessary that the Inspector should be proficient in all, but this can hardly be expected, under ordinary circumstances, if the duty is performed by a single person. For this reason, it appears desirable that, instead of one Inspector, there should be appointed a Board of Inspectors, or at least examiners, who would be able to speak with authority as to the attainments of the pupils in each branch.

The present Board which now acts as a governing body is, for several reasons, not well fitted for the work.

In the first place, it appears to us that special qualifications are required for directing the course of studies and guiding the whole system of a higher education, which are not necessarily possessed by members of an Education Board constituted as the present one is.

In the second place, the governing body should have the means and qualifications necessary for appointing Inspectors, and judging from their reports as to the measures best fitted for increasing the efficiency of the school.