

and preparation of work are inevitable could easily be done in a few minutes by the elder pupils under the mistress's superintendence. Thus the incubus of extra work would be removed, the elder girls would learn to do for themselves what is in no way less important than the mechanical work of practising various kinds of stitches, and the instruction in sewing would be more thorough and efficient. In Victoria there are great numbers of State schools having much larger average attendances than any in Otago, and there no such grievance as this pressure of school work outside school hours is felt, simply because the pupils are taught to do for themselves what has in the past in many Otago schools been done for them. This appears to me the only satisfactory remedy for the alleged over-work of mistresses. I do not refer to the laborious preparation of work for a grand exhibition at the end of the year, because it is quite unnecessary, and is a gratuitous addition to the teacher's recognized duties.

As a body, the teachers of the schools with which I come into contact are earnest, hard-working, conscientious men and women, faithful servants of the public, eager to improve their methods and advance the efficiency of their schools and classes. Many are persons eminently fitted for the work in which they are engaged. The most common fault is the want of the sympathy and the cheerful kindness of manner and feeling which stamp the true teacher. Only a very few regard the work with indifference, and perform their duties in a formal perfunctory way, without enthusiasm or interest. Though nearly all lead most exemplary lives, there are few who attain to the exercise of a wide and weighty social influence. Many appear to invest themselves with a spirit of isolation and seclusion, which greatly impairs the effect they might produce on the character of the children and on the *morale* of the district in which they are settled. Frequent changes from place to place tend to confirm these traits, and to reduce a teacher's influence outside the school to a minimum.

The pupil-teachers as a whole continue to do excellent work. In many schools they even become valuable teachers, and long before their course is completed would compare very favourably with many a trained teacher. In some schools, however, they do very indifferently; either because badly selected in the first instance, or more commonly from the prevalence of a bad tone in the school, indifferent management by the head teacher, or failure on his part to advise and secure the confidence of the novice. In nine cases out of ten, the incompetence of a pupil-teacher is due to the neglect or incompetence of the headmaster. Their annual examination continues to show better education and higher intelligence, and the proficiency of those from some of the larger schools was extremely creditable.

DISCIPLINE.—In the great majority of the schools there was good discipline. The drill exercises are becoming more generally known, and their execution is not seldom very creditable. I believe that these exercises have had a most salutary effect on the discipline of the schools in which they are practised, and in rural schools they have developed an air of smartness and order which is missed in similarly situated schools where drill is neglected. It is not easy to judge of the average order, attention, and interest of scholars, but I am of opinion that the schools of the district are in these respects in a healthy and sound condition. It is with pleasure that I record considerable improvement in the tone of a large number of schools, and my conviction that the examinations of the past year were answered not only with greater readiness and method, but also with greater honesty and independence than in any former year. My appeal in last year's report to teachers about the necessity of more strict attention to the manners and behaviour of their pupils has not been altogether without effect; but there is still, and will long be, ample scope for amendment in this by no means trifling matter.

BUILDINGS.—Very few new buildings have been erected during the year, but a large number are now under contract, and will soon be available. There are several small but not unimportant matters in which the buildings recently erected are deficient. A roomy press, provided with shelves, pigeon-holes, and a compartment for maps, should, I consider, be supplied for every new school. There should not be fewer than two black-boards, one at least provided with an easel. A number of brass-headed nails driven at intervals into the walls are required for suspending diagrams, wall-cards, &c.; and a map-stand, cross-shaped at the top and mounted on a stable foot, should be considered indispensable. The porches or lobbies, as at present designed, are much too small, and necessitate the objectionable practice of hanging some of the hats and cloaks in the schoolroom. The ventilation also needs improvement. There is generally a sufficient outlet for foul air provided in the roof, but there is no special inlet for fresh and pure air beyond the doors and windows. It is necessary that every room should have two or three such inlets, independent of windows, and they should be so under control as to be readily closed in the very boisterous weather which prevails more or less at certain seasons in every part of the district. Sooner or later the Board will have to undertake a complete refurnishing of many of the older schools. Under the old system, the School Committees erected school-buildings, the Board contributing two-thirds of their cost, and the people of the district the remaining third. As there was no recognized or lawful way of raising this moiety, Committees, even the most zealous, experienced great difficulty in getting it subscribed, and so the cheapest buildings that would at all meet requirements were generally erected. As a result of this ill-devised system, the Board inherits a great number of badly-designed schools, devoid of ventilation, and above all provided with furniture and appliances of the most meagre and unsuitable kind. There can be no doubt that the efficiency of the teaching, the disciplinary training of the pupils, and the comfort and convenience of both scholars and teachers are in such cases very greatly impaired, and that no time should be lost in turning all unsuitable seats and desks to firewood and replacing them by commodious furniture. I have repeatedly impressed on various School Committees the urgent need for providing ventilation, a sufficient number of black-boards, properly-constructed desks and seats, and other necessary improvements; but in few cases has anything been done. In many instances the sum now allowed by the Board for these and cognate purposes has been swallowed up in meeting liabilities incurred under the old system, while in a few a large proportion of it is spent in a secretary's salary. Whatever may be the causes, it is certain that few Committees effect such improvements and repairs as the funds at their disposal would with good management compass. A considerable number of schools are still unfenced, and a great many