

WELLINGTON.
PRINCIPAL'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Normal School, Wellington, March, 1881.

I have the honor to submit, as requested, a report on the work of the Wellington Normal School for the four months of its active existence.

The building was formally opened by His Excellency Sir Hercules Robinson on May 3rd, but the officers of the school were not appointed for some months. They entered on their duties on September 1st, and work was definitely commenced on Monday, September 20th. The three months since passed have been a time of much anxiety, great difficulty, and proportionately little progress. The difficulties inseparable from the early conduct of all such institutions whose establishment is indicative of reform in the existing order of things have in our case been increased by the non-settlement of the regulations—the conditions under which the work was ultimately to be carried on—and by the very inadequate supply of the proper necessary apparatus. The work has accordingly been of a very tentative character, and cannot be accepted as a fair specimen of what the school is capable of doing, and will do, under more settled and favourable conditions. Indeed, it has been found impracticable, so far, to take up some of the most useful branches of work. The number of students present during the first week was 6; in the course of a fortnight it increased to 12, the limit at which it has ever since remained. The ratio of females to males is 2 to 1. Six of the whole number have been pupil-teachers; four others have had some teaching experience; the remaining two are new to the work. One of them is an Oxford graduate. Two males and two females have been on probation this term. The progress made by three of them justifies me in recommending the Board to accept them as regular students next term. In explanation of the fact that the numbers have been stationary for the last two months, it must be borne in mind, first, that no publicity has been given in country districts to the work of the school; and, secondly, that no effort has yet been made to bring it under the notice of the Boards and Committees in the various other educational districts whose needs the Wellington institution is intended to supply. These things, indeed, cannot well be done until the terms of studentship are definitely settled. Till then we can scarcely anticipate any great increase of numbers, though possibly some other pupil-teachers from the city schools may join our ranks after the examination which is now rapidly approaching. Thirdly, it must not be overlooked that much ignorance prevails, even among fairly-educated people, concerning the precise nature and work of a normal school. The term, intelligible enough to teachers, is scarcely explanatory enough for the general public. When the school has had time to make its influence felt, and the public mind is familiarized with the idea involved in the name and is aroused to a sense of the importance of the work of training teachers, the institution will no doubt meet with more outside sympathy and support.

The practising arrangements, the adjustment of which was a subject of anxiety before the school was opened, have worked better than might have been anticipated, thanks to Mr. Mowbray's unflinching sympathy and hearty co-operation. These have rendered workable a system which must nevertheless *per se* be deemed unsatisfactory, as depending unduly for its success on personal temperaments. Moreover, it is obvious that the work of a large town school, well planned and well officered, with a teacher and separate room for each class, differs in very important respects from that for which most of our students have to be trained. Its organization is essentially different. It will be seen at once that the purposes of the training school would have been better served by a smaller practising school placed under the direct control of the normal master: a school in which the students could have seen his methods of organization and school management carried out in their entirety, and his theories of education submitted to a practical test: a school in which the teachers would have gained, over and above certain hints on class management common to all schools, actual experience of work, closely akin to that in which the majority of them would afterwards be engaged. Such a school once established could be maintained in efficiency at comparatively small cost, as the students would form the bulk of the teaching staff.

An infant department is also a most desirable, indeed, almost an essential part of a practising school. It is emphatically *the* school for teachers, where they learn better than anywhere else their own weaknesses and deficiencies; where their attention is necessarily directed constantly to the fundamental principles and essential processes of all true education; where thus sound habits of work are acquired, and lessons of life-long value learnt. The school need not be a large one, but it should be a thoroughly good one, under a specially trained infant teacher, and should be conducted as far as possible on kindergarten lines. At any rate, the work should be thoroughly learned with kindergarten principles. I hope it may be possible to take some steps in this direction in the not-far-distant future.

The Government Educational Museum, which forms a part of our Normal School establishment, has received liberal donations of books, diagrams, mathematical instruments, &c., from the Home publishers and manufacturers, and we now possess in it the nucleus of what will ultimately prove a most valuable adjunct to our machinery. There is a library of 800 volumes, which it is intended eventually to open, under certain necessary restrictions, to teachers. Any persons who possess articles of scholastic interest, memorials of the educational past, English, American, or foreign educational works and appliances, would confer a benefit on the profession generally by placing them on exhibition; and manufacturers of improved school apparatus would consult their own interests by sending specimens or models, with full particulars as to cost, &c., to the museum. As it is a matter in which the teachers of the district are especially interested, I hope all will use the influence they possess to make the museum the success it should be.

I am glad to report favourably of the students in training. They have given me every satisfaction by the earnestness they have displayed, and by the progress they have made in all their studies. Some of them are teachers of very decided promise.

In conclusion, I desire to express my appreciation of the valuable services rendered by Mrs. Griffin. Her conscientiousness and diligence have been beyond praise. She has by her enthusiasm