

One prevailing fault is a tendency to rush on at a high rate of speed, in breathless haste, without paying due regard to pauses. Another fault is low and indistinct utterance, which is often sought to be attributed to the timidity of the pupils and other feeble causes. The main cause is the want of tact and resources on the part of the teacher. An educationist of considerable note was wont to impress upon students in training that, whatever faults a school had, they were to be laid to the account of the teacher, and not to be saddled on the scholars. Except in very exceptional cases this is quite true. A school is very much what the teacher makes it—a statement of the truth of which I can give a good illustration. A school in my district, under two successive teachers, was notorious for some years for the backwardness of the pupils in reading and speaking. One had to bend painfully over the members of a class to catch the words read, and it was next to impossible to extract an answer to a question. A third teacher took charge, and after a few months an entire and most welcome change was brought about. Every pupil of every class, from the eldest to the youngest, read in such a clear, distinct, and deliberate manner that one could throw aside the reading-book and listen with pleasure and freedom, and not mistake a syllable. The school was the same, the pupils were the same, but the teacher was different. The foregoing contrast suggests another connected with discipline, in respect of which it is a pleasure to be able to report a most satisfactory improvement. A teacher of an important school, in many respects well qualified, lost control over his pupils to such an extent that he had sometimes to seek refuge from fear of bodily harm in a most ludicrous fashion. It was impossible to conduct an examination of this school with any degree of comfort or satisfaction, because of the general bad behaviour and helpless ignorance of the pupils. Another teacher took charge, who, in a very few months, brought about, apparently without an effort, a complete transformation on the whole tone and character of the school. The former obstinate indifference and rebellious mutterings were succeeded by a willing obedience and a ready response to the wishes of superiors. The circumstances of the school were the same, but the teacher was different. One cannot help, after consideration of cases like these, coming to the conclusion that what is said of poets is true of teachers.

Comprehension of the meaning of passages read, and of pieces of poetry repeated, is not always so full and clear as could be desired. The teaching of so many subjects and the superintendence of so many classes are apt to divert attention from this important matter. It will be found, however, that intelligent teaching, involving as it does suitable preparation of lessons, both as to matter and method, will in the long run produce the best results. Where there is so much to do, and so little time to do it, it would be advisable to combine instruction in several subjects when opportunity offers. A reading lesson could be made not only the means of conveying general information and a knowledge of the meaning of words and expressions, but could also be used at the same time to give instruction in grammar and composition as well. A paragraph or two of a lesson critically examined as to the separate facts stated, the meaning and spelling of any unusual word, the construction of sentences, the character of their different parts, and the parts of speech employed, would accomplish much. I have found this kind of exercise profitable, and one by which the minds of even young children can be reached and interested, when tempered to their capacities.

Composition in some cases appeared to have been carefully taught, but in the majority of schools the specimens of it were rather poor. Although the subjects given for the exercise were thought to be familiar to the pupils, still what they wrote about them was often extremely short and meagre, probably because they had few ideas to give expression to. Object-lessons and lessons on common things, as well as affording an excellent means of furnishing the pupils with stores of information and of increasing their intelligence, could be turned to good account in supplying subjects and materials for exercises in composition and grammar. Pupils must first have some knowledge of a subject before they can express that knowledge in grammatical and fitting language. A text-book that would combine object-lessons, composition, and grammar would be of immense benefit to the pupils, and would be helpful to the teachers.

The examinations for the past year were conducted similarly to those of former years, partly by oral and partly by written work. I do not consider it necessary to refer particularly to every class and subject taught in the schools, as that would be to some extent but a repetition of remarks in previous reports; but will conclude by giving it as my opinion, formed after a perusal of a number of educational reports, that the state of education in this district will compare most favourably with that of any other, either in our own colony or out of it.

I have, &c.,

WM. TAYLOR,  
Inspector of Schools.

The Secretary, Otago Education Board.

### 3. MR. PETRIE'S REPORT ON DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 29th March, 1881.

I have the honor to submit my report on the district high schools for the year 1880.

The following tabulated statements show the extra branches taught at each of the district high schools in the Otago District:—

*Port Chalmers District High School.*—Examined 29th and 30th November, and 1st December, 1880.

Subject.	Class.	No. of Pupils.	Work done.
English ... ..	I.	2	Paradise Lost, Books I. and II.
	II.	16	Book I.
Latin ... ..	I.	1	Cicero, Four Orations against Catiline; Cæsar, Books I. and II.; and Principia Latina, Part II., pp. 39 to 93.
	II.	1	Cæsar, Book I.
	III.	7	Principia Latina, Part I. to p. 51.
Algebra ... ..	I.	5	To end of simple equations.
Geometry ... ..	I.	1	Euclid, to Book III., Prop. 20.
	II.	3	Euclid, to end of Book II.