

TEACHERS: THEIR SELECTION AND TRAINING.—The Board have, on the whole, been fortunate in the selection of their teachers. The weakness complained of last year in the work of assistants in large schools was met with this year in only one or two instances, and several good new appointments have been made. The cases of chronic weakness are few. I know nothing which contributes so much to educational success as the careful selection and training of teachers. The head teachers of our large schools are in many instances highly certificated and very capable officers, and I have much pleasure in bearing testimony to their devotion to duty, and to their able administration. Cases are not wanting in which the head teacher spends fully two hours a day more in school work than his service requires; and I am sure the present high classification of many schools is mainly due to the enthusiastic and painstaking work of teachers who are anxious to do good work, and conscious of the fact that good work will be duly appreciated. Many of our teachers have now received a good training, some few in training colleges, and some by a course of experience gained by well-earned and well-merited promotion from school to school; and, of the latter class, not a few are in the front rank of the profession. It is, for instance, a matter of congratulation to the service that the new head teacher of the Te Aro School, Willis Street, who has been entirely trained as a teacher in the service, this year produced results inferior to none in the city. The pupil-teachers, who, in many instances, are appointed from probationers who passed the Sixth Standard, are year by year improving in usefulness. The plan pursued during the past year in the tuition of city pupil-teachers is working well, and possesses all the elements of a collegiate course of training, bringing into the work the best and most varied teaching the Board can command, and creating a class emulation impossible to obtain under the old system. Nor do I think the pupil-teachers are overworked; on the contrary, some few are the reverse of energetic.

PRESENTMENT DEFINED.—I have made no return of the children who, having passed a standard last year, were not presented in a higher standard this year. I find the number very few, seldom exceeding a dozen in the largest schools. From very irregular attendance, dullness, or tender age there will be a number of children in many schools who cannot be expected to pass a higher standard. As some teachers are at a loss to know what children may be withheld and what may not, and in order that all schools may be on the same footing in the estimate of standard passes, I will ask teachers to put down all names on the schedule of candidates for any standard, and to allow all to be presented. Then, after the examination is made, if I find that a candidate, who has failed, is more than one year under age for the standard in which he was presented, or if the candidate has made less than 250 half-day attendances in the past year, I shall not look upon that candidate as an expected pass, and I shall cancel his name from the list presented. This, I think, will be perfectly fair to both parents and teachers.

WEAK POINTS.—For the guidance of teachers as well as for the information of the Board, I will briefly point out some of the defects in school work and management which came under my notice during the past year. The simultaneous work in junior classes was generally much too loud, and I should say distressing to the children's voices. Only one class reader is in use in many schools, and consequently the subject-matter is known by heart. All the city schools have two readers. I should prefer three for higher classes, one of which should be a history, to be occasionally used as a reader, and one should be the property of the school. Exercises in English composition should be given more frequently, and the subject should be taught in class on the black-board. A 6-inch globe, now supplied to all schools, should be used in teaching geography to Standards II. and III. Word knowledge in all classes is deficient. Some teachers should be more careful in their enunciation; and even reading lessons may require preparation by junior teachers. I have heard a teacher say, "In a *Lung* division sum, three were right and three were *wrung*;" and another taught a whole class to pronounce the word "*morass*" as if it were written *morras* with the accent on the first syllable. In some schools slate lines for the younger classes are badly scratched by the parents or by the pupils themselves. It should always be carefully done by the teachers. Children in certain country schools are not taught to break easy words into syllables, or to make any effort to find out the pronunciation of a word. Time-tables and public school notices are in many country schools badly mounted. I regret to find also that good new school-buildings are sometimes used by local bodies as drill-sheds, and for other purposes never intended by the Legislature.

THE NORMAL SCHOOL.—In accordance with instructions received from the Board, I inspected and examined the Normal School on the 27th and 28th days of October last. There were present ten students in training as teachers, two holders of Board scholarships, and nine private students. I was very favourably impressed with the system pursued, the arrangement of work, and the ability of the instructors. In the *vivâ voce* work, which consisted of reading, analysis of sentences, word-meaning and derivation, and the sense and force of the passages read, there was evidence of good painstaking teaching. But, in the short papers given in arithmetic, spelling, grammar, and, in the case of private students, in geography and history, the marks gained, except in spelling, were by no means high. I am of opinion that the students, taken as a whole, are too young; and, with the exception of two or three, they are not strong enough in their work to form very good material for the legitimate work of a normal school. The institution, however, is in the first year of its existence, and another year may bring an influx of candidates whose education is more advanced. Ten class lessons were given during my visit, and in all cases the teachers had acquired in a degree a knowledge of their art. One or two of the lessons gave evidence of skill, originality, and force. Mrs. Griffin's lecture on domestic economy was interesting, showed careful preparation, and was well suited to the class. I was also present during a lesson in singing given by Mr. Parker, who is not only an able musician, but also a skilful class teacher. I find that drawing from models has not been taught, the Misses Holmes confining their work to freehand. Mr. Holmes appears a good teacher of practical geometry and perspective, although at present little progress has been made.

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