

informed, the most enlightened school authorities and teachers are setting their faces against practices like those described last year; practices the almost inevitable result of which will be "a race of men who will be incapable of doing anything which is disagreeable to them." The development of larrikinism in Victoria should serve as an emphatic warning to New Zealand.

Among the schools 38 are taught half-time—that is to say, one master takes two schools, teaching each for half the time; it may be week about or some other arrangement. I consider every alternate week the best for elementary schools. These schools have succeeded admirably where the teacher is competent and energetic and receives the support and encouragement of the parents. Where the parents are opposed to the plan the schools do not get on so well. I have no doubt myself that a well-conducted half-time school will produce as good results as a well-conducted whole-time school, and in a far healthier way. I have long thought that this plan is especially adapted for the higher education of girls. It is heart-rending to think of the amount of work in the way of school lessons and accomplishments which a girl is often expected to crowd into every week. No time for the digestion and assimilation of knowledge; but little time for healthful exercise or for the acquirement of acquaintance with home duties. I am convinced that if half the time were given to school work and the remainder left free for other things, the "dull brain," that "perplexes and retards," of many a girl would be cleared. Health would be given to her, intellectually and physically; a real educating process would be substituted for our present senseless proceedings. At these future generations will look back with amazement. I am convinced that this system could be well applied in some form to the larger elementary schools. The half-time system has great possibilities. In this way, perhaps, the problem of how to give technical instruction during school years can best be solved. In this way time can be found for girls to acquire a knowledge of household duties. These things have been done in other countries. I quote from a recent author. "Take one out of a hundred instances that might be adduced: The *Albergo dei Poveri* at Naples, one of the most wisely conducted and most successful institutions of the kind in the world, has turned street boys into Pääsellos and Verdis. Here, although the more refined and elevated arts of music, drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, &c., are taught, it is not as accomplishments to vitiate the character by unclassifying the pupils; but, some one of these pursuits being carefully selected, according to the aptitude of each individual, it is thenceforward made the subject of his special and serious study as a future profession. Those boys who are found to have no aspirations or qualifications for anything higher are taught bookbinding, cabinetmaking, tailoring, shoemaking, &c." I give this quotation simply to show what may be done, and to furnish food for thought. If the value of the half-time system were generally recognized, carpenters, dressmakers, and others, would probably take boys and girls as apprentices at an earlier age than usual, on the understanding that the apprentices should attend school on every alternate week. I am certain that neither the school nor the workshop would suffer. The elasticity of mind produced by variety would insure better work in each. Youths would be early trained to habits of industry, and a most welcome relief would be afforded to many an overburdened parent. Then, there is the money question. The growing cost of education in New Zealand is a matter for grave consideration. Under the half-time system the same building and the same staff would be enough for twice the number of pupils. Here is the possibility of a great economy in the future, when a large increase takes place in the number of pupils. But perhaps it is too much to expect people to clear their minds of old notions which have their roots deep down, and which spring from an unconscious (or conscious) belief in cram—that process so "fatal to all true intellectual life."

There is a smaller economy which, I think, could be practised with beneficial results in many ways. If no children under seven years old were admitted to the public schools a saving to some extent would be made in the general fund and the building fund. The children would be very much benefited. It will be seen in the education reports from the southern districts of New Zealand, where the standard system has been in operation for some years, that the average age at which pupils pass the First Standard is about nine and a half years. Nothing but harm can come to children from being kept stewing in schools for the first two of these four years. To shut up a child in a school at five is to arrest his physical growth and his intellectual growth. Just at this time he most requires freedom and fresh air. Just at this time his observing powers are developing rapidly, and should have free scope.

I regret to say that a tendency has begun to show itself here which should not be allowed to grow into a practice. We have been happily free from it hitherto. In more than one case teachers have sought to obtain appointment or promotion by canvassing and bringing outward pressure to bear. It is easy to see how pernicious may be the results of this tendency. Fitness may cease to be considered. Not the man who has most qualifications, but the man who has most friends, may be he who will get appointments. The possible disastrous results to pupils and parents may come to be left out of sight altogether. This is no vague apprehension. A Royal Commission is now sitting in Victoria to examine into, amongst other things, the causes of the unsatisfactory state of many of the Victorian schools. It has already been made plain enough that many of the schools are in a wretched condition, and it has also been made plain enough that this disastrous state of things has been brought about by patronage. Ministers of Education have repeatedly passed over teachers of whose fitness they were assured in favour of men whose chief qualifications were the good word of a Ministerial supporter. It is, of course, not very likely that things will come to this pass here; but the evil principle is the same when favour and not fitness is allowed to be made the road to appointments. All efficient teachers should resent this; all who have the good of education at heart should resist it.

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