

throughout the year with reasonable regularity, and who have been carefully and steadily taught during that period, stand in need of no overpressure just before their work is to be tested to enable them to pass their several standards. As for those who have attended badly, or who have been unskilfully taught, it is hopeless to attempt to make up for the shortcomings of eleven months by the feverish activity of the twelfth. Nor ought I to pass over the not much less objectionable practice of making a bugbear of the examiner. From the outset it has been my endeavour to disarm examinations of many of the terrors with which they have been quite needlessly beset. There is no reason why cheerfulness and good humour should not have some part even in the cut-and-dried routine of a standard examination. Both teachers and scholars have quite enough to try them on that occasion without the purely gratuitous additions of harshness and irritability on the part of the examiner. I find, however, that my best efforts in the direction of softening the hardships of an examination are, singularly enough, often neutralized by the ill-judged intervention of the teachers themselves, some of whom go so far as to prognosticate the failure of their scholars—a kind of prophecy that not unfrequently brings about its own fulfilment. Some of my most painful experiences have been in schools where the children had evidently been wrought up to a fever of nervous anxiety which I found it almost impossible to allay. Nor is it easy to judge, under conditions of morbid excitement, what the children could really do in calmer moments. It should not be forgotten that the competitive element enters little, if at all, into a standard examination, the main scope of which is simply to ascertain how many scholars know enough to enable them to fulfil the requirements of the regulations. Ample opportunity for those who long for a keener intellectual struggle is afforded by the numerous examinations for scholarships and for the Civil Service. That these exciting contests are an unmixed boon few will be hardy enough to assert; but they are at least optional, and those who enter into them do so with their eyes open.

HOME LESSONS.—It is mortifying to have to complain that my persistent efforts to abate the nuisance of home lessons—efforts which at one time promised to be crowned with success—are in a fair way to be entirely thrown away. By quoting the examples of some of our best schools, to show how home lessons might successfully be dispensed with, I had, as I thought, convinced all but a few of our teachers of their inutility (the Board, the School Committees, and the parents were with me from the outset). I now discover that many teachers have slipped back into the old vicious groove, and that long tasks are being inflicted on young children, who must perforce prepare them during hours that ought to be devoted to recreation or to sleep. I only regret that my power of interference is limited to remonstrance. Otherwise, the mischief should not endure for a day. As it is, I can only appeal to School Committees and parents, with whom the remedy lies, to help me vigorously in this matter. Let a beginning be made at once by insisting that under no pretext shall night work be given to any scholar below the Fourth Standard. And if a concession to inveterate prejudice must needs be made, let it be a rule that the tasks imposed on the older scholars shall not exceed an hour in duration.

ORDER AND DISCIPLINE. MANNERS.—Not the least perplexing part of my task on this occasion has been the attempt to fill up, with any degree of satisfaction to myself or to others, the column in the Inspector's annual return headed "Manners." The column for "Order and Discipline" presents comparatively little difficulty. Rare, indeed, are the instances where I do not find the scholars attentive, well trained in school drill, and reasonably quiet in school hours. But good manners mean somewhat more than all this. An Inspector who is unable to visit the majority of the schools in his district, at the utmost, oftener than twice within the year, has but slender opportunity for forming a decided opinion as to what the behaviour of the scholars may be, especially outside the schoolroom, on ordinary occasions. He is, indeed, the last man who is likely to detect unmannerliness. He never sees the school, as it were, in undress. During his visits of inspection the children are naturally all on their best behaviour, and on examination day there is too much serious work going on to leave much scope for impropriety of conduct. On the whole, however, after making due allowance for the difficulty of coming to an accurate conclusion on this head, I feel justified in giving a favourable opinion as to the manners of our scholars. But too much must not be expected from our teachers. It must be borne in mind that the school is only one of the many influences that go to build up a child's character. To go no further, the roadside and the street, and—most potent of all—the home life, largely modify, for good or for evil, the school training. All the virtues under the sun, including the graces, cannot be taught within the space of five hours a day for five days a week during ten months of the year. On the whole it is not too much to say that, if all other agencies, including parents, did their part as well as the teachers of our public schools, there would be little to complain of on the score of manners, or, as it may be better put, morals. [Here follow reports in detail on seventy-nine schools, not reprinted.]

Rockville and Little Grey Schools have both been inspected, but have not been examined. At Rockville the building was in course of removal to a more central position at the time appointed for examination. At Little Grey the school was temporarily closed owing to the teacher having just left before my arrival in the neighbourhood.

Long-continued bad weather again prevented me from visiting the two schools at the Karamea, which could only have been done at such a sacrifice of time as I could not just then afford. Each year, indeed, an increasing proportion of my time is unavoidably frittered in endeavours (occasionally abortive) to reach the small and sometimes almost inaccessible schools that are now being planted in nearly every bay and ravine of the Nelson District.

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

I have, &c.

W. C. HODGSON.