

Drawing and history are the class subjects in which least marks have been given. The former has been well taught in about twenty-five schools, but in the majority—especially in the small schools—the results have been very poor. Here, however, there is a gradual improvement, which the new standard regulations have done much to bring about.

History has been well taught in many of the large schools and in some of the small ones; but in some of the schools, including one or two of the larger ones, I have found that the children have taken in unassimilated and indigestible matter, and I have had reason to think that it would have been better if the teachers referred to had not wasted their efforts in attempting to teach it. The Minister of Education said in one of his speeches, "I have listened to a history lesson which consisted in dictating short passages that were answers to probable questions. The teacher evidently had no grasp of his subject himself and could not impart any to his pupils." I regret to say that I have had a similar painful experience, and that in several schools some of my questions were met with evidently prepared "answers," which were not the result of a grasp of the subject, but a piece of mischievous memory-work. The time when most of our larger country schools will have graduates in them or teachers able to impart higher instruction to those in the district who need it, however devoutly to be wished, is yet to come. About a quarter of the teachers in charge of the schools visited had a certificate higher than E, and it cannot be expected that a large proportion of those with attainments indicated by this certificate, however well they may handle many of the subjects of primary instruction, will take up very successfully a subject which, to be taught with anything like good effect corresponding to effort, must be skilfully treated by those who have a grasp of the subject themselves. Still there is no separate syllabus of instruction for large and small schools, and as some of the teachers in the latter take up the subject with success, and a gradual improvement in the teaching power is to be expected, I am glad that the subject is in the syllabus of instruction. What can be done in the meantime is by inspection and by vigilance at examination to get better modes of treatment introduced, and to condemn vigorously those which are mischievous.

In all, saving very few, of the schools visited the "class" subjects have not been shirked, though they have been taught with varied success. Judging *à priori*, the tendency to give undue attention to "pass" subjects, with the corresponding tendency to give insufficient attention to "class" subjects, would be found most in schools near to one another where competition for "results" would be likely to secure undue attention to the subjects on which the passing in standards depended. By careful inspection and strict examination I have endeavoured to check this tendency to neglect the class subjects in the few schools where I have recognised its existence.

The "additional" subjects are recitation, drill, singing, needlework, subject-matter of reading lessons, extra drawing. With the way in which the first three of these are being attended to I am, on the whole, satisfied. In some of the schools that have adopted my suggestions to teach the scholars to recite suitable pieces of prose as well as of poetry there has been a marked improvement in this subject. To needlework insufficient time is given. In a large number of schools the "subject-matter of reading lessons" has not been well treated. In my report for 1885 I stated that, in the higher standards, I frequently found that "the children could read a large portion of their reading-book fluently without having any idea of the drift of the lesson, as the explanation they had been accustomed to was simply the substitution of one word for another, with little or no attempt to bring them into communion with the thoughts and feelings of the writers." The mechanical work only has been done in too many cases, but I consider that want of time has been the chief cause why more attention has not been given to the subject-matter of the reading lesson. The necessity of making time for the proper treatment of the two subjects just spoken of will be shortly brought before the Board in the memorandum referred to.

As a rule the primer classes are being well taught. In a few instances, however, I have noticed that when the staff has consisted of a head-master, mistress, and pupil-teacher, an unskilful pupil-teacher has been put in charge of these classes, and in such cases I have had to correct the mistake of putting the untrained to teach the lower classes, and of concentrating the teaching power on the standard classes.

I now speak particularly of the schools where the work was very mediocre or very poor. A statement of the condition of each of these schools is in the Board's books, and exact copies of the examination reports have, in the usual course, been sent to the Committees. Besides this, in five cases, where the deficiencies were very serious, special reports were sent to the Board recommending that some action should be taken; and in six other cases the Board's attention was called by special report, without recommendation of immediate action, as causes beyond the control of those in charge had contributed greatly to the unsatisfactory results. In some of the schools classified as very mediocre the results were attributable to irregular attendance, in others to changes of teachers, in others to want of energy in certificated teachers who could have done better, in others to the want of skill of those who were doing their best to give satisfaction, or to a combination of some of the causes named. Regularity of attendance, however, often depends upon the way in which a school is conducted. All except three of the schools here spoken of were inspected as well as examined. Some of the schools classed as very mediocre were in charge of certificated teachers from the training college, and I regret to have to say that in them either the work or the discipline was not what was to have been expected in schools conducted by those who were supposed to have gone through a thorough course of training in the art of teaching.

The supply of good male teachers from within the province is insufficient. I think that by advertising only to a very limited extent the Board has lost opportunities of securing trained and skilful teachers for positions which, under the circumstances, have been filled by others with less skill. I noticed in a telegraphic report the other day that it is computed that above four hundred certificated teachers in this colony were out of employment in December, 1886.

Seeing how many small schools there are in the Auckland Provincial District, I think that there should be, in connection with the training college, a model country school—that is, that there