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## EDUCATION: SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

REPORTS OF THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF SCHOOLS ON THE OTAGO BOYS' AND GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOLS.

[In Continuation of E.—9, 1894.]

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency*

### REPORT ON THE OTAGO BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 25th August, 1894.

I have the honour to lay before you, at your request, a statement with respect to the organization and work of the Boys' High School as I have observed it in the course of an unusually minute inspection extending over the whole of the school-time yesterday and the day before, and as I have considered it in the light of copious information supplied to me by the Rector and the secretary

You asked me to pay particular attention to the "commercial side" of the school. The distinction common now in English schools between the "classical side" and the "modern side" has no place in this inquiry, for the simple reason that in the Boys' High School there is no classical side. There is only one boy learning Greek, and the instruction he receives in that subject is not given in school hours. The whole school, therefore, belongs to the "modern side," and I conclude that by the "commercial side" is meant that part of the organization by which special provision is made for boys whose parents desire that no part of their time may be devoted to Latin. The number of these boys is six, and two of the six omit French as well as Latin. One of them is in the Lower Fifth, one is in the Upper Fourth, three are in the Lower Fourth, and one is in the Remove. It would not be reasonable to expect the Board to provide a special teacher for these six boys, and if one teacher were appointed he could not teach them all at the same time. The arrangement that is made for them is as follows: The boy in the Lower Fifth intends to be a mechanical engineer. He comes from a primary school in which he passed the Sixth Standard. He has been a year and a half at the High School, and is in his seventeenth year. The five hours a week when the Fifth Form is at Latin he spends in the mathematical master's room, and works alone at algebra and Euclid. The master decides what work he shall do, leaves his own class-work occasionally to see what this one boy is doing, and is always ready to answer a question or render assistance in a difficulty. When I asked the boy how the five hours were spent, he said he worked by himself at algebra, and had no help, but I found that, by Mr Brent's direction, he was actually working at Euclid, and when I further questioned him he confirmed the statement I have here adopted as to the supervision exercised by the mathematical master. The boy in the Upper Fourth came in at the beginning of last year after passing the Fifth Standard. He is in his eighteenth year. He began Latin, but was not getting on well, and he gave it up because, as he told me, his parents wished him to do so. He spends the five Latin hours in the mathematical master's room, working at arithmetic. He at first informed me that he received no help during these hours, and, like the boy in the Lower Fifth, he did not appear to recognise any inconsistency in acknowledging, on being further questioned, that Mr Brent's supervision, and direction, and assistance, were available and operative. The two boys of whom I have spoken that learn neither Latin nor French are between sixteen and seventeen, and both have passed the Sixth Standard in primary schools. One of them began to learn French, but was not making much progress in it. The three hours of French he devotes to physical science under the supervision of Mr. Brent, of the five Latin hours he spends two in Mr. Anderton's geography class, two in private reading of geography under Mr. Anderton's supervision, and one in the gymnasium. The other boy takes three hours at book-keeping (under the supervision of Mr. Anderton) in place of French, and of the five Latin hours he gives four (under the same supervision) to algebra, and one to gymnastics. The one boy in the Fourth Form who learns French, but not Latin, is in his seventeenth year. He came from a school in Fiji, where he passed the Sixth Standard (according to the Melbourne syllabus, I believe). He spends the five Latin hours in Mr. Anderton's room as follows: Two hours in geography class, two hours alone at geography, and one hour alone at arithmetic. The one boy in the Remove, who

learns no Latin, has passed the Sixth Standard, and is close on sixteen. He devotes four hours to geography in the manner that has just been described, and one to gymnastics (in addition to the hour he spends in the gymnasium with his form)

I have said enough to show that the few exceptional cases of what I may call non-Latin boys are treated with exceptional and individual consideration. I may have put too narrow a construction upon the term 'commercial side' I will therefore adopt another point of view and proceed to show how far the time-tables and the general organization of the schools have been adapted to recent circumstances, to local requirements, and to the demand for a modernisation of the "modern side" of which the school now consists.

As to the time-tables, without entering into perplexing details of the differences as between the several forms, I may divide the twenty-five hours of the week according to what may fairly be called the type of work in this school. Under the head of the "old learning" I include Latin and mathematics. Arithmetic I exclude for the present, but trigonometry—comparatively modern—I put under mathematics. Latin takes up five hours a week, except in the Upper and Lower Sixth, where it occupies six and seven hours respectively. To mathematics five hours are devoted. In an intermediate place I put English (the language and collateral subjects, such as geography and history) with five hours, and arithmetic with two hours. As most of the boys have passed the Sixth Standard, two hours seems to be sufficient for arithmetic, but more time than this is given to it in special cases, and less when the pupils have made good progress in mathematics. Under English I take in writing, which is systematically taught in the lower part of the school, and is so far from being neglected in the upper part that if any boy is found to be declining in his writing—and this will sometimes be the case where there are many exercises to write and some are hurried—he is sent back to a writing class. History, I may say, is not very diligently cultivated. Science and drawing may be regarded as essentially modern subjects. To each of these subjects two hours a week are devoted, except that modern science is not taught in the Lower Form (Third), and drawing is not taught in the Sixth and Upper Fifth. French occupies three hours a week in all the forms. German is optional in the Sixth and Upper Fifth, and is taught out of school-hours. One hour is given to gymnastics, a very modern subject, but I fear a very important one to many boys who have worked hard to obtain Board scholarships or free tuition. I find that bookkeeping has long been taught in the school, and that in two forms it is now made a class-subject. It has its uses as an exercise in neat writing, and as giving boys some idea of the distinction between cash-book and ledger, and between the debtor and creditor sides of an account, and of the meaning of a balance, but it must be borne in mind that almost every firm of any consequence must have a method of bookkeeping adapted to the general and to the special character of its business, and that a boy's mental training in a high school should be such as to make it very easy for him to acquire in the office the technical knowledge necessary to a clerk.

The present organization of the school is controlled by the relation that the High School sustains to the primary school, and in this respect the change that has taken place between the date of my first annual visit to the school and the date of this (the sixteenth) visit is very remarkable. In the old days there was a First Form in the school, and a Second, and a Lower Third, and an Upper Third. Of these there is now only one in existence—the Third, formerly called the Upper Third.

The reason of this change is that now almost all the pupils come from the primary schools, and most of them have there passed the Sixth Standard, many, indeed, have remained there a year or more after passing the Sixth. The youngest boy now in the school will be twelve years old next month. Exclusive of a few sick boys who have not been at school this term, the number of pupils is now 200, and not less than 136 have passed the Sixth Standard in public schools, while twenty-two left the public schools after passing the Fifth Standard, and eleven after passing the Fourth. This leaves thirty-one boys who may be called High School boys proper, but even among these thirty-one there are four who have been at primary schools, and have passed some standard below the Fourth. These thirty-one boys are distributed among the forms as follows: Third Form, 5, Remove, 5, Lower Fourth, 3, Upper Fourth, 6, Lower Fifth, 2; Upper Fifth, 7, Lower Sixth, 1, Upper Sixth 2. The extreme case of reliance on the primary school is found in the Upper Sixth. It is a case of a boy nearly seventeen, who entered in February last to be specially prepared for a university examination. Fifteen years ago the form a boy was in depended chiefly on the progress he had made in Latin and mathematics, and the trouble was to know what to do with boys—then reckoned lop-sided—who knew nothing of these subjects, but who, coming in with scholarships, were too old and too much advanced in primary-school subjects to be placed near the bottom of the school. Now, a boy's place in the school, except in the highest forms, is determined by his knowledge of English (and collateral subjects) and of arithmetic. The Fourth Form boy is not necessarily in the Fourth Form in Latin or in French. The whole school is simultaneously occupied with Latin for five hours a week, and the classes for Latin do not correspond to the forms in which the boys are placed for other purposes. Each boy goes to the Latin class for which he is fit, and a boy in leaving a lower class in which he has done well may be promoted to a class above the next to that in which he has been taught. Similarly, all the French classes (including the whole school) are engaged at French at the same hour, and a boy is classified especially for French according to the progress he has made.

I have shown that a large share of the school-time is devoted to subjects that were not formerly much cultivated in grammar schools, and that the most elementary parts of some of these subjects are fairly well known to most of the pupils when they enter. I now add that the most backward pupils in these subjects are not neglected. I found Mr Williams, who teaches English, French, and German with admirable ability and earnestness in the upper part of the school, engaged (as prescribed by the time-table) in instructing the very lowest form in English grammar. A few of the most backward pupils in arithmetic have, since the beginning of the present term, presented a slight difficulty to the management. They were not quite fit for either of the divisions of

the lowest class. That lowest class is in charge of a junior teacher, whose hands were quite full with two divisions just beginning the work of the term. The backward pupils were therefore drafted off for a few weeks to work at easier arithmetic in another room, under the eye and, to some extent, under the instruction of a master whose chief business at the time was the care of a drawing class. But now that the stress incident to the beginning of a term in a class with two divisions is fairly past these pupils will take their place again in the arithmetic class as a third division under the master who is responsible for the arithmetic.

I suppose that any one who is anxious with respect to the efficiency of the instruction that bears most directly on commercial pursuits will lay most stress on these subjects—English, arithmetic, and geography. I think ample time is given to these subjects, and I add that all study of languages tends to broaden and deepen the knowledge of English, while all mathematical study has a bearing on arithmetic, and on calculations and accounts. Modern languages certainly sustain a direct relation to commercial life, and bookkeeping has relation to nothing but commercial life. With respect to modern science, I could wish that some one subject, in which physical facts and mathematical investigation are associated, were included in the school programme. Physics, with Balfour Stewart's Primer as a text-book, is a subject for the Lower Fourth, but that does not provide what I have in view. The Fourth Form is not ready for the mathematical work, and the book is too elementary, and not marked by sufficient precision to be a basis for such work. I suppose, however, that the programme at the top of a school must be influenced, in some considerable degree, by the conditions of examinations for which the pupils are being prepared.

As to the books in use, I see no reason to challenge the judgment of the authority by which they have been selected. My reference to Balfour Stewart's book is not inconsistent with this conclusion. In the Fourth Form, and in the hands of a teacher whose instructions throw light upon its brief statements, it is not out of place. Good teachers are not likely to use bad text-books if they have any option.

And here I should like to say that your Board has succeeded in obtaining the services of excellent teachers. The improvement in the knowledge of French in the upper part of the school during the last few years is remarkable. In my report presented to the Minister of Education after last year's inspection, I made special mention of the wide range of Latin reading in your Upper Sixth. With respect to mathematics I should not wonder if, because Mr Brent has been here thirty years, it were supposed that he might be out of date. A glance at his new edition of Euclid will satisfy a mathematical student that he is up to date, and I can testify that he knows the art of teaching a class as distinct from the art of individual coaching. At an ordinary time I should not make such definite reference to the quality of the teaching as I have done here, but the occasion is not an ordinary one. You have very able teachers in your service. That the teaching must be good in the upper part of the school you have proof in the position the institution holds in the competitions to which it is invited by the University. It is fair to conclude that the teaching in the lower part of the school cannot be bad, for it is impossible to make up in the last two years for loose work put into the foundations in the years that went before. I do not expect to find all the juniors in a staff equal to their chief or to their senior colleagues, but I can assure you that good and faithful and sound work is being done in the lower part of your school as well as at the top, and that the younger men have the benefit of the advice and support of the seniors.

I am not sure that the method of selecting free scholars (as distinguished from holders of Education Board scholarships) is satisfactory. Some of the free scholars are as far down in the school as the Remove, and one is in the Third. These I saw in a dictation exercise, and the weakest of them were making strange mistakes. On the other hand, I see that in the Lower Sixth there are free boys who have not been longer in the school than boys who entered with scholarships, and in the Upper Sixth is one scholarship boy who has been as long in getting to that form as the free boys. It might be worth while to ask the rector to investigate the comparative status and progress of the two classes of boys. My opportunities are not sufficient for such an investigation, and I cannot venture beyond the expression of a doubt as to the adequacy of the 50-per-cent. test.

May I say in conclusion that there is no school in the colony where my regular visits of inspection are made easier for me than here, by frank welcome and by the prompt supply of all returns and information I find it necessary to ask for?

I have, &c.,

WM. JAS. HABENS.

The Chairman Board of Governors, Otago High School.

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#### REPORT ON THE OTAGO GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 27th August, 1894.

I have the honour at your request to submit the following statement with regard to the Girls' High School, which I have this day inspected.

I am able, as usual, to express my satisfaction with the quality and character of the work done in the school, and to speak in terms of high commendation of the earnest and intelligent devotion to their studies displayed by the pupils, especially in the senior classes.

As I said in the case of the Boys' High School, I am inclined to think that the weakest of the free scholars have been admitted on rather easy terms.

The only remark I feel called upon to make with respect to school-books is that I should like to see a more complete text-book of Latin grammar in the hands of the senior pupils.

I understand that it is in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Governors that pupils are admitted to attend only at certain hours for instruction in the special subjects to which those hours are appropriated, and that the regular pupils are allowed, if their parents desire them to do so, to omit some of the subjects included in the ordinary school course. I find that sixteen pupils

attend the studio for drawing and painting without taking any part in the other work of the school, and that in the Lower Sixth Form one attends only for English and French, and two for English only. In the Upper Sixth three are exempted from the study of botany, and one from trigonometry. In the Lower Sixth there are twenty-two pupils, besides the three already referred to. Nine of these are exempted from trigonometry, seven from botany, three from chemistry, and two from Euclid. Some take the full course, and some claim exemption in more than one subject, the extreme case being that of one who rejects four subjects—trigonometry, Euclid, chemistry, and botany. In the Fifth Form, which consists of forty-eight pupils, there are seventeen who do not take the full course. In the Fourth Form, consisting of forty-six pupils, the number claiming some exemption is four. The pupils in the Upper Sixth are eleven in number, and they all learn Latin, constituting Latin Class A. There are twenty-two in the Lower Sixth, seventeen of them learn Latin, and fifteen of these, with one girl from the Fifth Form, who, for the sake of Latin, sacrifices a little English and a little mathematics, constitute Latin Class B. Two Sixth Form girls and one Fourth Form girl, with twenty-one girls out of the forty-eight that belong to the Fifth Form, make up Latin Class C. Latin Class D is composed of nine girls from the Fifth Form, and thirteen from the Fourth Form, which form contains forty-six pupils. This Latin Class D consists of beginners, and devotes only two hours a week to the subject, whereas five hours are given to it in Classes A and B, and four hours in Class C. The presence of so many Fifth Form girls in Latin Class D is due to the fact that many girls who at earlier stages do not accept instruction in Latin develop a desire to learn it when they reach the Fifth Form. As is the case with Latin, the French language is taught in classes made up for the purpose, with no strict regard to the forms to which the girls belong. Most of the pupils, with the exception of those in the First and Second Forms, are in one or other of the French classes (A, B, C, D, E), and the number in all these counted together is 140.

The number of pupils entered as belonging to the several forms is 173, distributed as follows: VI., 33, V., 48, IV., 46, III., 19, II., 20, I., 7. There are about sixty who have not attended public schools. There are seventy who have passed the Sixth Standard at public schools, besides twenty-one who have passed the Fifth, and fifteen who have passed the Fourth. Those who come up from the primary schools take their place in the High School on an examination in English and arithmetic. The best generally go into the Fifth Form—very rarely into the Sixth, Fourth Standard pupils are usually placed in the Second Form—but the largest proportion of pupils that enter from the primary schools are put at first into the Fourth Form.

The organization of the school, with its five French classes all taught at the same hour, and its separate Latin classes, renders it possible to recognise by suitable classification any attainments a new pupil has already made in French or Latin, or both, and affords facility for quick promotion in the case of any who, by reason of special ability, or of advantages due to age and corresponding fitness for diligent study, may make more than average progress.

The difficult problem of adapting the time-table to the necessities of new-comers arriving at different stages of progress, and differing widely with respect to the proportions in which the several subjects of elementary knowledge have been combined in the preparatory instruction they have received, has evidently been very carefully studied, with the result of a very near approach to complete success.

I have, &c.,

WM. JAS. HABENS.

The Chairman Board of Governors, Otago High School.

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