

the fact that these are not left to be dealt with at their discretion, but that science, and the following branches are prescribed by the Act, and that instruction in them is as obligatory as in those which are commonly called the three R.'s. Two of these subjects, vocal music, and elementary science, have been specially dealt with by the Board.

VOCAL MUSIC.—In the course of the Inspector's visits to the schools, it was found that a large number of the teachers required to be instructed in vocal music, and, in order to their improvement, the Board proposed to establish a class in Invercargill on Saturday afternoons, and to employ a competent music master to give the necessary instruction. A circular was sent to all the teachers, inquiring whether, in the event of such a class being opened, they would take advantage of it. A response in the affirmation was given by nearly all who could travel to town by train in the morning and return in the afternoon. The Railway Department, however, though they had granted to the teachers of Otago for a similar purpose the privilege of travelling by rail to and from their capital at a reduced rate, refused to allow the same privilege to the teachers of Southland. The scheme was consequently abandoned, to the very great regret of all concerned. Another scheme was suggested—viz., the employment of itinerating teachers; but the adoption of this was met with the objection that the instruction imparted would necessarily be of a fragmentary nature, and that its value would be disproportionate to the cost of its maintenance, even for a part of the year. This subject, which is undoubtedly a most important factor in securing good discipline, is generally taught by the headmasters and mistresses of the various schools. At the District High School a visiting master attends on certain days of the week, and is remunerated for his services by payment of a moderate fee for each pupil.

ELEMENTARY SCIENCE.—There seems to exist among certain classes of the community a misconception as to the meaning and scope of elementary science, and an objection to their children being crammed, as they call it, with dry scientific facts and technical terms. The truth is that science-teaching in primary schools simply means a knowledge of the objects and common phenomena of external nature, whether animate or inanimate, whether plants and animals, or motion and chemical change. In this sense science can be taught at an early stage, and will be found to be most conducive to the exercise of the observing faculties. In order to enable teachers to enter on the study of elementary science, Professor Black, of Dunedin, with characteristic disinterestedness and enthusiasm, delivered in Invercargill a course of lectures on chemistry and physics, of which advantage was taken by a large number of teachers. Mr. Thomson, science master in the Boys' High School, Dunedin, has promised to give a course of lectures on botany early in January. Every encouragement was given to the lectures by the Board, who, however, had the same difficulty to encounter as on the occasion of establishing a vocal music class. The Railway Department again declined to grant passes to the teachers at a reduced rate; and, had the Education Department not come to the rescue, the lectures, if delivered at all, could have been attended only by the teachers in the town and its vicinity. In connection with this, it may be mentioned that the Board some time ago ordered from England several cabinets of chemicals and apparatus, as arranged by Professor Roscoe, of Queen's College, Manchester, whose Science Primer they are designed to illustrate. These have now arrived, and will in due course be entrusted to those teachers who have signalized themselves by their competency to teach the science and conduct the experiments.

EXAMINATIONS.—Examinations for pupil teachers and for scholarships were conducted simultaneously in the District High School on the 16th December and following days. The number of pupil teachers who sat for examination was 33, and for scholarships 24. For results and examination papers see appendix.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES.—The grant to Southland, under the Public Libraries Subsidies Act, for 1877-78, having been included in that to Otago, it was considered expedient that its distribution should be made by the Education Board of that district. The grant for 1878-79 was transmitted directly to this Board, and will, when the books arrive, be distributed among the various library committees who have sent in a claim for participation. Although the course of procedure was made known both by circular and advertisement, the mistakes which were made by the committees, in consequence of their being called on to select books for both grants simultaneously, caused so much delay that the first consignment of books could not be ordered till the month of September. As the books have not yet arrived, I am under the necessity of deferring a full report till next year. As to the usefulness of the libraries, and the influence which they exercise on the community, reference may be made to the returns from library committees recently sent in.

PENNY BANKS.—The expediency of establishing Penny Banks in connection with the schools of the district was brought under the consideration of the Board at an early period of the year, and a resolution was passed permitting their establishment, but declining to make the adoption of the scheme by school committees compulsory. It was felt that the management of Penny Banks in the schools would be adding another weight to the heavy burdens already imposed on the teachers, and that the benefits resulting from their establishment would be questionable. It may be inferred that school committees coincide with the Board, as no application has been made by any of them for permission to introduce Penny Banks into the schools.

THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS.—This question was brought before the Board, at a meeting held on the 6th June, and, after considerable discussion, a motion was carried almost unanimously declaring it to be the opinion of the Board that the Bible should be read daily in the public schools without comment. Copies of this motion were forwarded to the Government, and also to all the school committees, accompanied in the latter case by a request that they should give an expression of their opinion on the subject. Of the 55 committees then existing, 37 expressed themselves in favor of the resolution, and 8 against it. The remaining 10 were either neutral or failed to make any return.

BONUSES TO TEACHERS.—After June 30th, when the first classification of teachers was made in accordance with regulations issued under the authority of the Governor, the Board adopted the following scale for payment of bonuses;—Rank 1, £60; 2, £50; 3, £40; 4, £30; 5, £20; 6, £10; 7, 8, and 9, £5. This scale, as compared with that adopted by some of the other Education Boards, is very low; but the large number of weak schools, and the few self-supporting or strong schools in the district rendered it necessary to have a due regard to economy in its construction. The number of teachers