

been given time to obtain an E certificate, they shall, when called upon to do so, take any appointment which may be offered them in any part of the district. At present many of our small schools are taught by uncertificated and inexperienced teachers, because ex-pupil-teachers duly qualified are unwilling to go into the back country, notwithstanding the experience of those who have done so and not regretted the step taken.

In the columns set apart in the appended departmental forms, in the one for "Order and discipline," we have given an approximate general statement of the condition under the headings so far as we have been able to judge. Sometimes it happens in a well-ordered large school that one teacher is deficient in discipline: and in the same way we find occasionally only one class or a section of a class in a school showing bad form in its manners. We feel that these are important returns; at the same time there is danger in making an apparently invidious distinction between one school and another. We can on the whole speak favourably of the tone of the schools, although there is much in the conduct of youths in our streets which is reprehensible, and of which it is difficult to say whether the schools are or are not in any degree responsible. The want of respect in many young people for persons and property is certainly deplorable, either because in this colony the spirit of mischief is too active, or the latitude allowed by parents to their children is too wide, or the sense of veneration is uncultivated. Be it as it may, we hope our teachers will keep the question well before them, and we feel sure that they will do all in their power by precept and discipline to train our rising generation to respect the feelings and belongings of others. There is one form of incipient vandalism which should, if possible, be suppressed with a strong hand, as there is no possible excuse for it; we mean that love of mere destruction which leads to the defacing of public buildings and the spoiling of trees and shrubs. This is, however, mostly the work of older boys; and the suppression of it falls more in the province of municipal authorities than in that of the schoolmaster.

An important step has lately been taken by the Board, which will in time lead to much improvement in the teaching of singing. It has been decided to hold an annual examination of teachers for a certificate of competency to teach class-singing, the examination to be conducted by a specialist on lines laid down by examining bodies on this subject in England. The suggestion came from Mr. Robert Parker, who holds the position under the Board of instructor of teachers in singing. His classes are held in Wellington and Masterton, and are largely attended and much appreciated, for he is an excellent class-teacher, and most enthusiastic in his work. It is thought that the annual examination, the first of which is to be held next June, will have the useful effect of stimulating our young teachers to qualify for the special certificate, many of them having already expressed a wish to do so; and others who possess more than average musical ability will be pleased to have their qualifications duly recognised. Other benefits will follow, such as the introduction of a better defined course of instruction, attention to voice production, the selection of the most suitable exercises and songs, and the supply of cheap copy in large quantity. This last is much desired, for it will pave the way for musical instruction, inasmuch as there has been a difficulty in the past both as to subject and supply of copy, the price of which was often prohibitive of class supply.

Another important step forward has been made in regard to drill, which the Board has decided to put on a more military footing. Company-drill will be taught in every school in accordance with standing orders; and in large schools companies of from forty to a hundred boys will be put in uniform and duly officered. In the country two or more schools may join forces to form a company. As occasion may require, and at stated intervals, companies will assemble for battalion-drill. There will probably be two battalions, one for the City schools near Wellington, and one for the Wairarapa. It is claimed for this system, which is working well in New South Wales and Natal, that it will in many ways have a good effect in improving the discipline of school life, making the boys smarter in movement, giving them better carriage and address, and improving their physique by the gymnastic exercises, including swimming, which are a part of the training. As a national movement in the military training of all citizens, of which it is the rational beginning, the system has much to commend it. Indirectly it will afford technical training, as in learning to play musical instruments by buglers and bandmen, and in signalling, tent-pitching, and field exercises, and the use of the rifle. Companies are now being formed, and the movement has the hearty support of our teachers. So far as the teaching of drill is affected, it will make little difference in the work done by the boys, and the girls will retain the Indian club and pole drills. The present cadet corps at Mount Cook and Masterton will form the nuclei of their respective battalions, and the military officers from the Defence Department have already brought the city companies into a fair state of efficiency.

The subject of reading is always before us in any report on account of its foremost importance in our primary system. For years past we have experienced a difficulty in overcoming the resistance offered by parents to the purchase of sufficient varied reading-books for their children. There are still a few schools only using one book in each class, but in most schools two class-books are supplied; and in our best schools three are in use in many classes. The Board having lately decided to assist in this direction, as recommended in our last report, and a sum of £30 having been received from a fund collected by the City School Committees at the time of the Jubilee, we are now enabled to issue to all the City schools, and to many in the country, sets of class-readers to supplement those purchased by the parents. The sets lent by the Board for six months may be exchanged for other sets suitable for other classes; and in this way an extended use will be made of them, and parents will be encouraged in supplying two sets in all schools, for the series furnished by the Board will not be issued to any school unless at least two sets are already in use. In some schools funds have been locally raised for the purchase of a school set; and this is indeed most helpful in extending the application of the plan to more classes in the school. We are much pleased with the progress made in increasing the supply of Readers, and with the greater interest taken in the reading-lessons, for the new books afford fresh and pleasant reading and are beautifully illustrated.