

The training school is separate and distinct from what is known as a "training college." In the latter, special means are provided for the preparation of young teachers both in their studies and training, but mainly in the former. A school such as the Board has established cannot embrace both purposes, but it can fulfil the end for which it is established. The young teachers, fresh from their isolation, can be placed under new and modified conditions, and trained in the art of school-keeping; and so soon as this aspect of the training school is fully understood, it will be recognised as forming an important adjunct to the public system of technical training.

With the changes that the administrative work of the Board has been able to introduce during the year, it is interesting to observe that the year under notice closes the system of examination that has been in force since the passing of the Education Act. In future the Inspectors and teachers will occupy widely different positions in relation to standard examinations. The needless detail will disappear from the Inspector's purview, and up to and including Standard V. the principal teacher will have the right to pass his own pupils, subject to a controlling veto by an Inspector. It would be premature to remark upon this new system of examination. Some four or five years have gone by since the privilege was conceded for the examination of Standards I. and II. by principal teachers. Under careful regulation the plan has worked satisfactorily, and, so long as care is taken to maintain the same average standard in the schools throughout each educational district, there is no reason why the same plan should not be observed for the higher standards. I am fully convinced that the mote has been the end of our past examinations, whilst the beam has been left unheeded; by this I mean that more heed has been paid to a defect in the case of separate pupils, whilst the methods of instruction and the dovetailing of plan throughout the standard course have been almost wholly neglected. Considering that the schools are subject to so much supervision, it is surprising to find such a variety of plans and methods of instruction even in the same school where more than one teacher is engaged, and children passing from class to class, not to mention from school to school, are placed under quite different methods in the preparation of school work. One often hears remarks about the backwardness of children when admitted from other schools, but the fault rests more with the differences of system under which the pupils have been instructed. Even in subjects like arithmetic and history the methods in schools are so diverse that pupils are too often blamed on account of defects of plan which are permitted by principal teachers, who fail to realise that they themselves are responsible by their omitting to see that plans and methods are dovetailed from class to class and from standard to standard. The modified regulations will enable much more attention to be paid to the higher aspects of school training and preparation than has been possible hitherto, and if they lead teachers to take a wider view of their duties in relation to school life and its effect upon the future of the country a great good will have been accomplished. It is assumed that those who are entrusted with so much responsibility have acquired the art of their profession, and are capable of carrying that art into the work of a school. I have no intention of naming schools by preference, but there are teachers under the Board who take the widest view of training and give as much heed to manners, forms of courtesy, and right conduct among the pupils as they do to the preparation of school subjects. There character comes to the front, and teachers who aim to bring the several aspects of school training into one harmonious whole, by making character the end of education, fulfil the highest duties as teachers of the young.

It is hardly necessary to refer, except in brief outline, to the standard subjects of instruction. My various reports on the schools have dealt with these in detail. Although much time is spent in the preparation of reading it cannot be said that the average standard is a high one. The habit of quiet reading is acquired at an early age, and pupils prefer to read "to themselves" rather than to others. Most of the schools use three Readers, and latterly a bright little newspaper, called "Schoolmates," has made its appearance in many of the schools, and has become quite a favourite. It is not on the list of "official books," but one can hardly object to such a paper when it is purchased by the voluntary efforts of the children and is so well adapted to their tastes.

Attention has already been drawn to the absence of dovetailing in subjects like writing and arithmetic, and even in composition and grammar the same defects are apparent. The defects arise from the fact that principal teachers fail to direct the class teachers as to the plan of instruction that should be followed. One of the highest duties of a principal teacher is to regulate and direct the machinery of his school in the work of the several classes, so that each step taken in the preparation of a pupil will be continuous and harmonious. Increased attention to methods of instruction are very necessary. An old plan is followed simply because it is an old plan and was adopted when the teachers themselves were pupils. Take, for example, the simple case of the giving out and correction of a dictation exercise. The children, in many instances, are really taught to be inattentive by the teacher repeating a few words at a time, two, three, and even four times over. Conversation would become intolerable were the parties concerned to repeat themselves in the same manner. Inattention and bad memories are the outcome of such a plan, but the method of correction is equally imperfect and unsatisfactory.

Geography and drawing are usually well taught, and in a number of schools the average results are excellent. Class and additional subjects are taken in all schools, and in the larger ones they receive the same attention as is given to the pass subjects.

Advanced drawing is being taught in several of the schools, and for the first time a number of the pupils from the Napier School passed the second-grade art test of the Science and Art Department, South Kensington, London. Were increased facilities provided, all the larger schools would take up an advanced course, as drawing is, perhaps, the most popular among the school subjects. The Art School that has been opened lately in Napier is proving of considerable help to the teachers, and the teachers' Saturday classes are certain to have an influence on the future work of the schools.

Of the preparatory classes a few words must be said. Considering the conditions under which the younger children are instructed, it is a pleasure to congratulate the lady teachers who have