

218. Does it not seem to you that the adoption of a colonial scale in your district had better apply to the schools other than the aided schools: that all these aided schools shall get £5 capitation, and that the colonial scale shall apply to the others? Would not that get over the local difficulty?—Yes; I think that would be quite fair.

F. BIRCH, Chairman of the Blenheim School Committee.

219. *The Chairman.*] How long have you occupied the position of Chairman of the Blenheim School Committee?—I have been Chairman at various times, and I have been a member of the Committee many years; the positions of Chairman and Committeeman I should say I have occupied for the last sixteen or eighteen years. I was a member of the Committee long before the division of the sexes took place, at the time when the late Mr. Lucas taught as headmaster most successfully. At that time we had ample material in the way of male pupil-teachers, and it is a matter for regret that they are not obtainable at the present time, for I am sure that the Committee and the Board prefer for the boys' department male pupil-teachers. With regard to the last appointments we made, they were two female pupil-teachers, for, although we had the choice of a male assistant, we knew it was a foregone conclusion we should not be able to get one. My opinion is that the headmaster can do a very great deal towards obtaining male pupil-teachers, providing that a more liberal allowance be made to induce the boys to enter the profession, instead of, as is the case now, seeking employment in a merchant's office or elsewhere, with a commencing salary more liberal than is offered in the profession. With regard to the amalgamation of the sexes, I may say at once I am very much in favour of it. My own opinion is that the Committee as constituted at present will not hear of it; but I do not think they have good and valid reasons for objection. I think it is a standing reproach to this district that there is not that amalgamation of the sexes; the work of the Committee in that respect will take a long time to undo. I think the Commission will do good work if they bring about amalgamation, and also advise that the profession should be made more remunerative for willing boys to enter it instead of being allowed to drift away into other channels.

220. *Mr. Hill.*] You suggest that a larger remuneration should be offered to the boys to prevent them from seeking other situations: do you think any boy who passes through the standards is capable of becoming a pupil-teacher?—Perhaps not every boy; lots of boys who pass through the standards have not the necessary qualifications.

221. How would you propose to limit the choice?—I should expect the headmaster to do so. He should replace gaps in the ranks.

222. Has your Committee ever brought that question under the notice of the headmaster?—No; I think the Committee should call the schoolmaster's attention to a thing of that sort.

223. Is not the question one of adaptability? Possibly he considers there is no one adapted to the position?—Perhaps so.

224. *Mr. Gilfedder.*] The main point, as far as I can see, is the fact that the pupil-teachers are inadequately paid, is it not?—Yes.

225. They commence with a salary of £20 a year, or about 8s. a week?—Yes.

226. Do you not think that if you could provide better salaries for the male pupil-teachers you would attract them into the service?—Yes.

227. At present there is not much encouragement for males to enter the profession?—No, there is not.

228. In regard to your Regulation 20, which says that the headmasters shall be responsible to the School Committee, do you know the meaning of this responsibility?—No, I do not.

229. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] Did the late headmaster, Mr. Lucas, manage to secure male teachers at the lower salary?—Yes.

230. That was probably at a time when other occupations were not so numerous?—Perhaps so.

231. So that it was not due to the late teacher's special qualifications?—Yes, I think it was; he took the initiative, and was very much interested in seeing boys enter the service.

232. *Mr. Davidson.*] You admitted, I think, that the present rate of pay to pupil-teachers is altogether inadequate?—Yes.

233. And consequently there is not sufficient inducement for boys to enter the service?—No.

234. Has the headmaster of your school the fixing of the rate of pay to the pupil-teachers?—No.

235. Then, you blame him for not being able to induce boys to enter the service, while at the same time you admit that the salaries are altogether inadequate?—I say more could be done if the salaries were increased, and with the headmaster's assistance.

236. Do you know that the headmasters in other educational districts are not considered responsible for the introduction of boys into the service?—No.

237. *The Chairman.*] Under your regulations probationers for six months enjoy no salary at all?—That is so; I think there have been probationers in our schools for as long as three years without salaries.

238. Do you think that, under those circumstances, big boys would accept service of that sort, seeing that they would be, as probationers, subject to examination, and would get no salary? Does that not render it very clear why boys will not accept appointments of that nature?—Yes.

239. You think the amalgamation of the sexes would be advantageous?—Yes, I am sure it would be.

240. Instead of leading to undue familiarities, or anything undesirable, you think it would have the opposite effect by making the boys respectful and promoting good conduct?—Yes; it is not so much a question of the sexes as of the man who is to teach them.