

of health, by the way, brings to our mind the fact that some teachers gave the matter but scant consideration. We hold that in every school a three-years course should be prepared and given, setting out the essentials of the subject so far as these are comprehensible to primary-school pupils. We trust that the Board will institute early this year a course of physical training for pupil-teachers on Saturdays, so that Mr. Hanna's services may be fully utilised.

It remains to add that military drill has been well taught in schools in which, by parliamentary enactment, it is bound to be taught, and that the various cadet corps in new districts have advanced in strength and efficiency.

It will be seen from the reports presented that the district high schools are serving a useful purpose in affording to the young people of the localities in which they are situated satisfactory tuition in secondary subjects. The more liberal provision made by the Department for the working of these schools will still further enhance their usefulness. The courses of study have hitherto been unquestionably too bookish, but, with the liberal supplies of apparatus and material they are now receiving, there should be no further complaint on that score.

Special classes for teachers were again conducted, the most numerous attended being Mr. G. M. Thomson's botany classes at Gore and Invercargill. The teachers took a lively and sustained interest in the lessons, and were not slow to turn the work done, as disciples of Mr. Thomson, to practical account in the schools. We should greatly like to see Dr. Marshall, of Otago University, invited to deliver courses in geology. Such courses would be immensely beneficial to the teachers, and through them to the pupils of the district.

Teachers are inclined, with some show of reason, perhaps, to grumble at the increasing number of returns that have to be sent to the office. It should be remembered, however, that the multiplication of returns is a necessary concomitant of the increasing complexity in school organization and administration. But apart from the usefulness of returns to the teachers themselves, and to the authority requiring them, their preparation accustoms teachers to habits of promptitude, accuracy, and investigation, which imply not altogether unnecessary forms of business training. If the making-out of returns imposes a burden on teachers, the holding of examinations often impose a much greater burden. We have come to the conclusion, as a result of observation, that teachers burden themselves with examination overmuch. As a rule they know the standing of every pupil in a class perfectly well, and a minimum of examination should enable them to classify and award marks. There is no educative virtue in examination; it is at best a rough-and-ready measure of the effectiveness of education.

We suggested last year that after the quarterly or other term examinations the schools might be closed for a day or two, to give the pupils a rest and enable the teachers to prepare for the work of the next term. We are sorry that so few of the Committees saw fit to adopt the suggestion. There can be no doubt whatever that the arrangement would be distinctly beneficial to the schools. The abandonment of harvest holidays, even in districts in which the children have neither art nor part in harvesting operations, seems to be past praying for. The children are kept at home during the finest part of the year, but by-and-by they shall have to face bad weather and bad roads, and the teachers shall have to face bad attendances.

Aside of the question whether the course of education in our schools is in all respects the best possible, we may state that we believe the educational outlook, so far as our primary schools are concerned, is distinctly encouraging. In our last annual report we were inclined to be pessimistic, but, in view of all circumstances, we now modify the opinion we then held. The teachers have responded willingly and effectively to the claims of the newer subjects and the newer methods. The extent to which they have done so indeed affords proof, if proof were needed, that in the teaching profession in this district a fossilised element hardly exists. The uncertificated teachers too, to say the least, have done exceedingly useful work, very often in circumstances anything but favourable. We could name some of these teachers whom we should rejoice to see in possession of the Department's hall-mark, and we trust they will make an effort to secure it. Looking still further ahead, we note that the profession will presently be leavened by graduates of the Training College, whither some of our young teachers have already gone. It is difficult to realise what this implies. It implies that for the first time in the colony's history its schools will be taught by teachers who have received a rigorous and specialised training for the work of teaching; that the time is within measurable distance when the college-product will carry to the utmost bounds of the district the best methods of teaching and of managing children; that it will be impossible for children to leave school without having, with their own hands, performed experiments in general science and elementary agriculture; that, in short, we are approaching a time when the school will become, to an extent which it has never before been, a centre of illumination.

In conclusion, we may say that, in common with all who have the interests of education at heart, we hail with feelings of relief and thankfulness the increase in the teachers' salaries, and the institution of a superannuation fund.

We are, &c.,

JAMES HENDRY.
GEO. D. BRAIK.

The Secretary, Education Board.

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