

furniture, fencing, and other property is very considerable; and the annoyance to teachers from this cause is painful. If I ask why a pane of glass is broken, or a roller off a map, or an ugly word scribbled on an outhouse, the answer is, "I cannot tell; I am unable to trace these matters, because once a week such and such a meeting is held." In large schools we now build rooms for the School Committee to hold their meetings in; and besides these rooms none others should be used for any other than their legitimate purpose. Plans of school-buildings should emanate from the Board alone, and no alterations in plans or furniture should be made without the consent of the Board; for so little regard is paid to organization that in one case the local authorities spoiled the working order of a school by putting a chimney on what was considered a more sheltered side; in a second case the desks were screwed to the floor in chapel-form, and a rostrum erected; and in a third case the intention (happily frustrated) was to put a brick-chimney, which had to be taken down because it smoked, right in the centre of the floor of a country schoolroom. The schools are generally sufficiently high and well-ventilated; the lighting is, on the whole, good; and the furniture improving in style. In the country, parallel desks prevail; in the city, dual desks. I think there is great room for improvement in the neatness and order of many schoolrooms: they should be washed out oftener, and swept and dusted daily. Some, on the other hand, are models of neatness.

COLONIAL STANDARDS.—The examination was made this year, for the first time, in the new colonial standards, and their practical working for the next few years will be watched with interest. In this district a system of standards of gradual growth, working without hitch, and, though comprehensive, without undue pressure upon either teachers or scholars, gave way to standards drawn up for the whole colony. Suddenly there was launched upon districts, prepared or unprepared, a full and difficult programme, more comprehensive and more ambitious in aim than any in the British Empire. My district was, after five years' initiation, prepared for an ordinary emergency; but this was a trying one. As already stated, not a single school fully and entirely covered the ground of the schedule, although many teachers put forth extraordinary efforts to do so. One at least of the headmasters of the city schools taught, throughout the year, singing and drill out of ordinary school-hours. Not only teachers of small schools, where the multiplicity of subjects in all standards makes it so difficult to find time for all, but many teachers of large schools complain of the difficulty of giving sufficient time to the more useful subjects, now that the teaching of singing, drawing, drill, science, and sewing, is no longer optional. I think two mistakes have been made—one, in launching the whole scheme at once without giving time for the more gradual introduction of additional subjects; and another, by including the additional subjects within the standards. The English plan of treating them, and making provision for their being taught, as extra and optional subjects would, I am sure, work better and be far less expensive. Besides, without a very great expenditure of public money, and possibly not then, teachers will very seldom be found who are competent to teach many of these subjects; and drawing taught by a teacher who has never received special instruction under an art teacher, or chemistry taught by one who has never performed the simplest practical experiment, is a screaming farce. Then, again, if extra subjects are included in the standards, they must form a part of the pass made by each pupil; and, if they form a part of the pass, there is either the extreme difficulty of testing the knowledge of each pupil in each subject, or the manifest unfairness of giving pupils, who have no faculty for acquiring a knowledge of a given subject, the same consideration in marks as those who show a special faculty for it. Although I have confined my examinations well within the standard programme, I found that very large classes of pupils in three of the largest schools failed altogether to meet the requirements of Standard IV. In nearly every school, the passes in this standard were fewer in proportion to the numbers presented than the passes made in any other standard; and in really good schools the candidates passed with very low marks. I am of opinion that the standard programme is not evenly cast, and that Standard IV. is too high and at too great an interval from Standard III. There are also many points of detail in which I think the colonial standards will require amendment. I will briefly enumerate a few of them. Arithmetic in Standard I., and, indeed, in all the standards, is too high compared with the rest of the work. The geography in most of the standards is ill-defined. In the earlier standards it is too rambling, and, where defined, leads to cram. Geography and history should either make one sectional subject in both higher and lower standards; or they should not rank in lower-standard work as subjects of the same value, in constituting a pass, as reading and arithmetic. In cases of pupils presented for standards who are, say, a year under age (and this age should be defined), they should not be allowed to pass if very weak in any one subject, especially a First standard candidate. As the rule is now laid down, an infant of six years, in some cases, would be able to pass Standard I. in reading, writing, and spelling, though he might not be able to add three and five. In the working and interpretation of the standards I have, as far as appeared to me allowable, exercised a good deal of discretion. I have, in fact, tried to make them workable. Also I have been careful to see (1) that no child passes who is not fairly qualified; and (2) that no child is held back who is fairly up to the work of a higher standard.

PUPIL-TEACHER SYSTEM.—The pupil-teacher system is, on the whole, working well; but there are one or two matters touching the pupil-teacher system to which I wish to draw the attention of the Board. Except in a few country schools, there has been no difficulty in finding candidates—at least female candidates; but they should be chosen for their presence and energy as well as for their attainments. I think the age at which pupil-teachers are taken should now be raised to fourteen or even fifteen. I beg also to recommend the initiation of an entirely new plan for the training and tuition of pupil-teachers residing in or sufficiently near the City of Wellington. According to present arrangements, the pupil-teachers generally assemble for their instruction-class immediately after afternoon school, when, on a hot day especially, both pupil-teachers and their masters are wearied with the fatigue of the day. Many of them are young girls, on whom the strain of work tells materially. They meet in the deoxydized air of one of the schoolrooms, and, I fear, the tendency is to drag languidly through the work, and the results cannot be as good as they might be. Now that the Normal School is available, and it can be approached easily from any part of the town by tramway, the pupil-teachers could all assemble two three evenings in the week, from six to eight: they would come fresh to their class; the emulation of numbers would be beneficial; the cost of instruction would be less; and the instruction itself probably better directed. I feel sure the head-teachers would gladly be relieved of the duty of