

might be forthcoming. It is when we find the same want of intelligence in the history of Standards V. and VI. that there is substantial reason to complain of the character of the instruction. Unfortunately such occasions are too common—not only in small schools, where there is little time for teaching this and several others of the subjects, but also in the large schools, where no such obstacle to efficient teaching exists. The text-books in the hands of the pupils are, however, largely to blame for the indifferent character of the work; for they are either too meagre or too full of facts, while in both cases the connection of causes and effects is not traced with sufficient clearness and emphasis. The chief requisites for better instruction in history in the schools are: a better and fuller knowledge of the subject on the part of the teachers, and more careful and diligent preparation of the lessons to be taught. In no subject is it more necessary for the teacher to prepare the lesson thoroughly beforehand, and settle its scope and how he is to handle it. For intelligent instruction such preparatory study is indispensable, and to the general neglect of it the shortcomings in the teaching must be mainly attributed.

Frequent complaints are made to me by parents about the lessons required to be prepared at home. In several cases inquiry has shown that an altogether unreasonable amount of home work was prescribed. If the teaching in the schools is such as it ought to be, there should be no occasion for burdening children with work of this kind. At the outside, home lessons should not take up more than an hour for their thorough preparation. Anything in excess of that is unnecessary, and may be hurtful. I would advise that few or even no written exercises should be set for this purpose. In the great majority of cases they are so badly done that it would be a gain to omit them altogether. Where the lessons are *taught*, and not merely *heard*, home preparation is a matter of secondary importance. In the larger schools the school-hours are sufficient, if turned to proper account, for teaching all the scholars have to learn; and all that is required to get rid of the bugbear of home lessons is to make a practice of teaching a lesson first, and examining on it afterwards. It should never be forgotten that unnecessary hours of home study injure health, and mar happiness and comfort, at an age when these interests should be guarded with sacred care. Loss of health and sourness of temper are far too great a sacrifice to make for the doubtful advantages to be secured. A wise teacher will prefer to err on the safe side; and if he incur the censure of some parents, he will gain the approval of the more thoughtful, and deserve the blessing of the young, who are spared an unnecessary infliction.

Object-lessons, for the most part of a suitable character, are regularly given in nearly every school. I have asked that full notes of these be kept for examination, but a good many have failed to comply with this very reasonable request. I have not had many opportunities of ascertaining the results of the science lessons, but what I have seen has not impressed me highly with the value of this part of the school-work. In a few schools, however, the children have gained a good deal of useful and accurate knowledge of the elements of the subject. Not a few teachers in the smaller schools have given no instruction in this subject, the other claims on their time and attention not allowing of it.

Another year's experience of the present system confirms the opinion I have ere now expressed, that it cannot be successfully carried out in the smaller schools, in which a single unassisted teacher has to do everything. Such a teacher finds his time so cut up by the great number of lessons that must be taught separately that he can produce little impression. Many complain that, no matter how faithfully they work, they feel they are beating the air. They cannot, they say, dwell long enough on any lesson to teach it effectually, but have to hurry after the time-table. In a school with five standards and a single teacher, I have computed that at the very least 85 separate lessons must be taught every week. In most schools of this kind the number is 90, or over, but with proper care it may be reduced to 85. Now there are five hours a day available for school work. Roll-calling, class-movements, and other unavoidable interruptions, will occupy half an hour of this time. There will thus be left twenty-two and a half hours in the week for 85 lessons that must be taught separately, or an average time per lesson of somewhat less than sixteen minutes. Some will no doubt occupy less than the average time, and others may be correspondingly lengthened, but the gain of time for the longer lessons cannot in any circumstances be considerable. In the above computation two lessons a week are allowed for teaching each of the following subjects, to each of the two highest Standards (IV. and V.): Arithmetic, grammar, geography, history. Now the teachers assert that the time thus allowed for these lessons is insufficient for teaching them intelligently and efficiently. Were the attendance perfectly regular the difficulty complained of would be great, but it is always much aggravated by frequent absences for one or more days, and often for long periods. I must frankly admit that I consider the difficulty here insisted on a very serious one, sufficient to encourage teachers to attribute the ill-success of their labours to the unworkable and rigid character of the system they have to carry out, rather than to any deficiency in skill and fidelity on their own part. I do not say that this is always the cause of their ill success, but they often feel that it is a sufficient and unavoidable cause of failure. In the Otago District there are forty schools in the position just discussed. Their teachers possess, I believe, quite as much professional skill and ardour as their more successful brethren, but their percentage of passes was only 64, or 13 per cent. below that for the whole of the district. In the same district there were 28 schools with four standards taught by a single teacher. Here the number of lessons need not exceed 75, which will allow for each an average time of eighteen minutes. In these 28 schools the percentage of passes was 61, or 16 per cent. below that for the whole of the district. For the sake of comparison I have computed the percentage of passes in the thirteen schools in the North District having a staff of two teachers (aided by a pupil-teacher in two cases). In these the percentage of passes is 75, or 2 per cent. below the average for the whole of the district. The higher results in the thirteen schools just referred to I attribute mainly, if not wholly, to the circumstance that a considerably longer time can be given to each lesson, rather than to any superior skill on the part of their teachers. The above considerations go far to justify the opinion that the existing system of elementary education cannot, on the average, be carried on with success in the smaller schools. For intelligent and effective teaching a certain time is required, but the number of separate lessons is such as to leave this all-important condition unsatisfied. This being so, the teacher loses heart, the scholars are discouraged, and learning from text-books more or less takes the place of that quickening contact of mind with mind