

the dual desk, and the giving a different set of questions to each of the two occupants of a desk, would go far towards remedying the evil, though not unattended with difficulty in practice, especially in a crowded school. Doubtless other plans by which complete isolation at certain kinds of work may be secured will occur to teachers who know their business. Closely connected with this subject is the necessity for frequent rehearsals, both to test the attainments of the scholars and to familiarize them with the procedure of an examination. At these rehearsals it is essential that the conditions as to isolation, method, and strict attention to work that are required at the annual examination should be strictly observed. If this were done in every school, as it has long been done in some of our best schools, I do not see how a teacher could fail to gauge his pupils' capacities with a close approach to accuracy. Far more practice is also needed in what may be called the mechanical part of the work. The absence of *form* in the papers sent in is so general and so marked as to convince me that in many instances this by no means unimportant matter has been entirely disregarded. It is pitiable to see the helplessness of children who have to be told at an examination, apparently for the first time, that they must not copy out the questions, and that their answers must be properly numbered, and not jumbled together in a confused mass. Nor is it any part of an Inspector's business to teach these little details, at a time when his attention and that of the scholars are occupied with fifty other matters. It is poor work when troops have to be put through elementary drill on a field day. The value of habits of neatness can hardly be overrated, and slovenliness in the form of the work, however good the substance may be, always seriously affects my estimate of a school, knowing well how this fault will tell against the children in the battle of life.

The constant changing of teachers from school to school—a growing evil—reached its height this year. At the beginning of almost every month a long list of advertisements for teachers has appeared; the Board and School Committees have been worried with the never-ending task of selection; and the efficiency of our best schools has been seriously impaired by the inevitable change of system that follows every change in the staff. The process of disintegration has been carried on with a monotonous regularity. A having left the district or the service, B, from a neighbouring school, steps into his place, leaving a vacancy to be filled up by C, also a fellow-teacher in the same district; and so on in a vicious circle, which if not peremptorily cut short by the Board might affect a dozen schools. If promotion were the object of these changes, something might be said in their favour, but pure restlessness is at the bottom of most of them, the emoluments of the post abandoned being usually nearly or quite on a par with those of the post sought. The Board, in self-defence, has been driven to make a rule that a year must elapse between the date of appointment to one school and the date of application for another; but even this is inadequate to deal effectually with the mischief. It is not unreasonable to require that a man who deliberately selects a position the emoluments and requirements of which are perfectly well known to him should remain there for at least two years. A shorter period will be insufficient to enable him to make his mark in the school, if he studies his own reputation: it will certainly be insufficient to enable the Board, or its Inspector, to form any decided opinion as to his merits as a teacher, especially at the outset of his career. For my own part, if I had to choose a schoolmaster, I should carefully eschew the man of many schools, knowing that, whatever else he might be, he was certainly fickle. It is not very long since I referred to a difficulty that threatened to make shipwreck of our schools—the difficulty of getting decently qualified teachers to supply vacancies. Until quite recently the Board and the School Committees have been reduced to making their choice from a list of candidates (for the most part utter strangers) on the slender and untrustworthy evidence of written or printed testimonials. Some of these, on the face of them, betray the unfitness of the writers to give an opinion of any value on the matter. Others, sent in by veteran teachers of five-and-twenty years' standing, and bearing date from almost as many different schools, testified only to the want of tact, fickleness, or incapacity of the senders. But two fresh sources are now available, which, taken together, will, it is hoped, suffice for most of the probable requirements of our schools for some time to come.

During the past year, several young men who have completed their education at Nelson College have sought and obtained employment, either as assistant masters or as masters of small country schools. All are doing good work. Two of them, being former winners of College scholarships, are familiar with the routine of our public schools and the working of the standards. They also possess such a tincture of scholarship as is implied by the ability to pass the senior Civil Service examination, and, if not actually learned, have at least laid such a foundation as will enable them, by subsequent study, to raise a respectable superstructure of learning. Above all, their character and antecedents are known. I see only two objections that can well be urged against the employment of candidates of this class—their youth, and their comparative ignorance of the technicalities of school management and the art of teaching. But the force of the first objection is diminishing daily, and in the course of two or three years will disappear altogether. As to the second, I believe that the difficulty of mastering the mere details of school work are prodigiously exaggerated by those who have had special training in these by no means all-important matters, but who, during the process, may well have missed some other things of vastly more consequence, which it would be invidious to specify. To magnify the mysteries of one's craft is a trick of very old standing. An intelligent young man, who has been really educated and not merely instructed, will be ignorant of but little that is really worth knowing in this direction at the end of a year, especially if he is not too conceited to profit by the advice and example of his more experienced fellow-teachers in the neighbourhood, who are always ready to help beginners. These latter remarks, of course, apply to many others beside pupils of Nelson College. The probationers, of whom there are now twelve at work (all but one being young women), will in a short time furnish the Board, at small expense, with an excellent body of assistant teachers in large schools, and mistresses in small ones. As the more important posts fall vacant they may well be filled by the older and more capable teachers at present in the service of the Board.

I have no intention of departing from my former practice of giving a detailed estimate of the state of each school, so long as this course meets with the approval of the Board. That I should have been, more than once, coarsely and publicly assailed in print for having exposed the indolence or incom-