

reaches its maximum at very high pressure during the month or so before the appointed day. During this time the children and the teachers (in a school where this system is in vogue) have a bad time. Increased home-lessons, detention in school after hours, and extra work generally, reduce the more weakly constituted children to a condition which renders them unfit for the approaching ordeal; and complaints of anxious parents and guardians very naturally make themselves heard. But the examination day comes and goes. Now what a contrast! for, although this may happen a month or six weeks before the close of the quarter, I may, without exaggeration, say that in some cases the school work positively ceases as far as any attempt at progress is concerned. The time-table might as well be removed from the walls for all the useful purposes that it serves for the remainder of the year, and, after wasting all this valuable time, the weakness (if any is apparent) in the results is attributed to the strictness of the examiner, the irregularity of attendance, the insufficient staff, &c., while the truth is that the work has not been steadily pursued from the date of one examination to that of the next.

I do not know that the state of things described above is to be seen often in this district: it is sufficient for me to know that it exists, and that, if not repressed, there is danger of its spreading. With this is intimately connected the falling-off in the attendance immediately after the examination, which is made a matter of complaint at some schools; and I have no hesitation in asserting that, where this is the case to any great extent before the last week of the school year, it is almost entirely due to the fact that there is little in the shape of instruction worth stopping for. Many intelligent parents have noticed this total relaxation of work after the examination, which is as injurious to the scholars, morally, as the high-pressure system before was injurious physically and mentally. To account for the falling-off in any other way is to admit the suspension of all order and discipline for the remainder of the year. I believe it will be found that in schools where the work is carried on as systematically after the examination, and up to the end of the term, as it was before and during the remainder of the year, the attendance will continue up to the average until at any rate a week before breaking up. In some cases, where the results are either poor, or, though good, not so good as on former occasions, the local Committees must be held accountable. In one important school the services of a teacher were retained for a year after his unfitness for the position he held was known to every member of the Committee, and a special report on the subject had been forwarded to them. In another case an unfavourable report sent to the Committee two years ago was altogether ignored by them, and the teacher's cause was stoutly upheld, with the consequences that might have been expected.

In some of the schools under the 88th clause, where the results are bad, the small attendance causes the teachers' remuneration to be so ridiculously inadequate that it would be absurd to expect them to be properly qualified, and unjust to blame them for an inevitable failure. The Board has endeavoured to carry out the recommendation made in my last report relative to the employment of ex-pupil-teachers in such schools, but at present with indifferent success, the majority of those available being females, who are naturally disinclined to leave their homes for the small remuneration afforded by such schools. Three of these schools are now under the charge of youths, only one of whom has been a pupil-teacher in the service of the Board, though the others were formerly scholars at one of our public schools. The results at two of these were very poor; but for this the teachers are not to be held responsible, as the schools were closed for some time, and had not been long reopened at the date of the examination. Next year will show whether they are capable of satisfactory work. At a few of the 88th-clause schools the figures show a very good percentage of passes. Here I wish to state that the remark made in my last report, to the effect that in some cases these schools were "worse than useless," applies to them only as at present carried on. Their failure, in most cases, is not so much due to the teachers' inability to perform useful work as to the hopeless endeavour made to accomplish the whole work of the standards, which certainly is beyond their power. The consequence is that the simple subjects, which they might teach successfully, suffer through the loss of time thus fruitlessly occupied. If the subjects of instruction at these schools were limited to reading, writing, spelling, dictation, arithmetic, and letter-writing, it might be expected that fair results in those subjects would be obtained, and the children in the remote districts, where these schools are generally situated, would at any rate have laid a foundation upon which, if opportunity offered, a more ambitious structure could be afterwards erected. I do not know whether the adoption of such a syllabus for schools having, say, less than twenty children would be any infringement of the Act. If the Board should think well of this suggestion, the matter might be referred to the Department. So far from being, as was intended by the framers of the Act, merely aided schools, it is quite an exception to find the inhabitants directly benefited by these contributing anything towards their support; nor is this always owing to the poverty of the districts, as is evidenced by the large sums of money that are raised in some of them by public subscription for various objects during every year, not forgetting the almost universal collection for the purpose of provoking and perpetuating petty local jealousies by the annual distribution of (so-called) prizes, in connection with which I may add that the sums of money thus worse than wasted would form in many instances a substantial, welcome, and well-earned addition to the poorly-paid teacher's salary.

Having been led thus to allude to the subject of prizes, I may as well express my firm conviction, founded on an experience of five-and-twenty years, that, whatever may be their value in schools of a higher grade and of a private or semi-private character, prizes in elementary schools are often mischievous, generally useless, and always unnecessary. If, as is often the case, they are lavishly distributed, the ease with which they are obtained must neutralize whatever stimulating effect they may possess. If, on the other hand, they are reserved for the two or three scholars at the head of each class, the effect on the remainder must be the reverse of encouraging, since there are nearly always a few scholars who are recognized by their class-fellows as beyond the reach of successful rivalry, and, though to these the prospect of receiving a valuable prize may be an additional incentive to exertion, they are, as a rule, the very scholars who least require it. I believe that the publication of lists showing the order of merit and the number of attendances of the scholars in each class would be far more beneficial to the true interest of the scholars, and to the welfare of the school generally. The publication might be effected either through the columns of the local papers, or by means of lists suspended in the reading-room or other place of public resort. I am aware that these opinions are opposed to those held by