

CHARACTER OF STUDENTS.—I have encouraging reports of the past students. Some have won the commendation of critics not the most friendly, and I think all are trying to the best of their ability to do us credit. It is gratifying to note their attachment to the school and their lively interest in all its doings. The present students are thoroughly worthy, and some are teachers of unusual promise. The prizes given by the Board have proved a healthy encouragement to them in their work.

TESTS OF WORK.—The certificate ordeal (January, 1883) was passed through satisfactorily. The Inspector subjected the students to a searching two days' *viva voce* examination in August, and openly expressed his pleasure at the result. The October test examination revealed weak points in individuals, which we afterwards did our best to strengthen, but the bulk of the work was well done, and we look forward hopefully to the results of the examination in January, 1884.

STAFF.—The staff has been materially strengthened since my last report, by the engagement of Dr Cahill as science lecturer, and of M. Merlet as French master. In other respects the teachers are the same, and their work has been characterized by the same earnestness and self-denial as heretofore. To Mr Parker my thanks are especially due, for kind assistance in the Saturday lectures, and for the very successful musical arrangements of the midwinter festival. Mrs. Griffin is leaving us shortly. I lose in her a most diligent, pains-taking coadjutor. Her resignation will afford a favourable opportunity for reconsidering the working arrangements of the school.

COURSE OF STUDY.—The course of study remains substantially unaltered. It differs little in its general outline from the curriculum in other training colleges, except that we have so far done no university work, and that we devote more time to the study of the science and art of teaching than it receives elsewhere. And it is our wisdom to do this—it is the true work of the school; and, while I would not underrate high attainments in a teacher, I deem it of paramount importance that he should thoroughly understand his business, and strictly professional study must not be sacrificed to general culture. I hope, however, to teach Latin in the coming year. Some of the students have already a fair knowledge of it, and it may assist them to obtain the "D" classification, while it will enable others to pass the matriculation examination of the New Zealand University before leaving the school. If they can do this without detriment to more important work it will stimulate them to continued study, and check the mischievous tendency to throw books aside and regard education as finished when the coveted "D" is obtained. Although at present there are no university classes in Wellington, much can be done by private study, and we may hope not to remain always in the background in respect of higher education. I am also desirous of seeing the practical study of some branch of natural science taken up by the students. Lectures are good in their way, but it is the knowledge of science gained at first hand by one's own experiment which is the most valuable. The theoretical teaching requires to be thus supplemented. A taste for such study formed at school can easily be gratified in after-life, and it is well our pupils should be encouraged thus to diligently cultivate special talent.

PRACTISING SCHOOL.—The practising-school arrangements are still unsatisfactory. I have to thank the Board for doing its utmost during the past year to remedy this very defective part of our machinery. We have, however, still to lament it, and can only live in hopes of improvement. It must be patent to every one that the theoretical and practical departments should not be, as at present, under divided control. Were not the relations of the most cordial description between the heads of the two schools, a deadlock might result at any moment. Their interests are not and cannot be identical. The frequent changes of teachers, necessary in the interests of the students, must be a hindrance to the effective working of a district school, and only the most absolute efficiency of the permanent staff, and a general uniformity of style, can prevent the pupils suffering from such frequent changes of handling. Under ordinary circumstances—with a miscellaneous staff of unequal powers and attainments—the head-teacher finds it expedient to allot to each one the work experience has shown him or her most capable of performing, or, if changes are made, they are made once a year. This is not good for the teachers, but it promotes the progress of the pupils. And the school exists for them; their interests are paramount. In such a school a student cannot get varied practice, or a wide range of experience. The present practising school is, moreover, unsuitably planned for the work. Students cannot receive that constant supervision the weaker ones need, they have little opportunity of studying the plans of others, and none at all of seeing or superintending the work of the school as a whole. They can only acquire a certain limited knowledge of class management, and none of the varied forms of school organization. Again, a practising school needs a specially selected staff of thoroughly good all-round teachers, sympathizing heartily with the students, models for their imitation, and useful assistants in training them. An ordinary district school will seldom be found to satisfy this condition. What we require is a specially planned school, in which at all times the interests of the students shall be the primary consideration—a school which shall be an objective illustration of true principles and sound methods—a school in which students may receive thorough training in all parts of their practical work as teachers and organizers. Such a school I would ask the Board to keep steadily in view in all future modifications of our working plans.

SATURDAY LECTURES.—A course of Saturday lectures on the science of education was given to acting teachers and pupil-teachers during the year, and excited a considerable amount of outside interest. The attendance was regular, and the result of the experiment encouraging. I would recommend that this should form a regular part of our work. Short courses of lectures on particular points of teaching and school management might be given at intervals, the co-operation of specialists being secured when practicable. Such lectures would not only do a certain direct amount of good, but indirectly would serve to show who were the earnest students of their profession, the more teachable of the teachers, and those most likely to do work worth the doing.

VACATIONS.—I desire to thank the Board for recognizing the special character of the school, and sanctioning a rearrangement of the vacations. It has made the work of the year much less harassing for all concerned.