

Exercise-books are occasionally produced for inspection in which a cursory glance is sufficient to detect a number of uncorrected mistakes, not on one page merely but on several; the usual excuse for the existence of such being that there was no time to make the necessary corrections. If no time is available for carefully examining the exercises and referring to the mistakes in the presence of the whole class, then it would be better not to give them, as otherwise they are not likely to be very profitable. There is a well-grounded suspicion that many of the home-exercises are not done by the pupils themselves, but by kind friends whose services have been brought into requisition. Short memory-lessons, for the most part, ought to suffice for home-work. Exercises in arithmetic, grammar, and such-like, except perhaps in the case of the very highest classes, should be done in school under the teacher's eye, and where there would be every probability of the pupils being cast upon their own resources. In most of the schools, however, the exercise-books are very neatly written and corrected with great care.

Although I have thus shortly referred to a few defects in method which exist in varying degree in a number of schools, it is not because I am insensible to many instances of good methods and intelligent teaching by which a large proportion of the teachers carry on their work, and without which they would be unable to produce the very favourable results the several summaries show, but because there arises a natural desire to have weak points strengthened and to have unsound methods superseded by those more conducive to healthy mental development. Of course, in such a many-sided matter as education, opinions will differ as to the best means of reaching towards perfection.

The Secretary, Education Board.

I have, &c.,
W TAYLOR.

3. MR. GOYEN'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Education Office, Dunedin, 21st March, 1883.

I have the honour to present my general report for the year 1883.

From January to June I was engaged in examining pupil-teachers' papers, compiling tables for reports, writing reports, and making eighty-eight visits of inspection, and from June to December in examining seventy-one schools—two with Mr Petrie, eighteen with Mr Taylor, and fifty-one single-handed—and a portion of the work of the four district high schools. Of those seventy-one schools, three gained over 90 per cent. of the possible passes, twenty-three over 80 per cent., twenty-nine over 70 per cent., ten over 60 per cent., four over 50 per cent., and two under 50 per cent. Stating the results gained more generally, I may say that twenty-six schools passed well, twenty-nine very fairly, and sixteen more or less poorly. In the first group there are several very ably conducted schools. The practical work of the pupil-teachers received a large share of attention during the year, and I regret to say that the results of my observations were in many cases of an unsatisfactory character. In a few schools those teachers showed evidence of careful and skilful training in sound principles and methods of teaching, but in many they appeared to have received little or no training at all. It is true school methods were studied from text-books, but the most excellent text-book is a very poor substitute for the intelligent and persistent supervision and example of an able and earnest head-teacher.

ORGANIZATION.—The organization of a large school with an ample staff is not attended with any special difficulty, and in this class of school it is generally in most respects good; but the conditions are very different in small country schools, and great credit is due to many of the teachers of the latter for the skill with which they overcome the great practical difficulty of teaching, supervising, and providing suitable employment for, seven or eight classes. The chief defect connected with the working of small schools is the scant attention the classes below the level of Standard I. receive. Little variety of employment is provided for them, and, although much less able to work unassisted than the standard classes, they get vastly less assistance. They have a lesson of five or ten minutes' duration three or four times a day, their slates glanced at occasionally, and during the rest of the day follow the devices of their own hearts. Those classes generally constitute a large proportion of the school attendance, and, except in the large schools and perhaps a half of the small ones, are mostly engaged in wasting time. It is, I believe, an invariable rule that those teachers do best work who attend well to the foundations, the training of their juniors, and who aim at producing good independent workers in the senior standards. The pupils of such teachers work with zeal, and grapple patiently and successfully with difficulties that the overtutored senior is quite unable to cope with. The spirit of work is upon them, and I have seen their faces glow with satisfaction as each successive difficulty has been overcome. Such pupils it should be the aim of every teacher to produce: whether he succeeds or not will depend upon himself. It is certain, however, that to neglect his foundations is to invite defeat. I have seldom found a school without a time-table, but that document is not infrequently invisible until inquired for, when it is usually found in the teacher's desk. The instruction is that it should be placed in a conspicuous position on the wall.

INSTRUCTION.—The great body of teachers work hard and earnestly. It would be to the advantage of the schools, however, were they to do less themselves, and make their pupils take a larger share in the work of every lesson. In a large proportion of our schools fully nineteen-twentieths of the talking is done by the teachers. The children have hardly anything to do but attend, and this they do badly. It is true they have the appearance of attending, but a question or two interposed at the end of the lesson show that what passes for attention is merely bewilderment or a blank stare. Such teaching proceeds on two assumptions, both of which are certainly false (1) That when children look you straight in the face they are attending to you, and (2) that the plasticity of the youthful mind is such that whatever is said straightway impresses itself and becomes a portion of the child's mental furniture. This substitution of talk for teaching is a fruitful source of failure at examinations, for, notwithstanding that the children were "told this and