

the dreary task of recording an almost unbroken series of failures on the part of the scholars—failures which often seem to be anticipated by the teacher, and to cause him no compunction, distress, or regret. Of course it is in the smaller country schools that this state of things is most frequently met with. In these it frequently happens that only some three—or at most, four—standards are presented. I find that, of the sixty-five schools examined by me during the year, there are twelve that presented no higher standard than Standard III., and one in which Standard II. was the highest, whilst fifteen others went no higher than Standard IV. How worthless is the education that stops short at Standard III. a reference to the syllabus will show. Education, as defined by Standard III., means pretty much this ability to read the Third Royal Reader, or perhaps the Fourth to spell a little, provided the examiner restricts himself to the words of the reading-book, to write round-hand, to work sums in addition, subtraction, and division of money, multiplication being omitted as too difficult, in grammar, to recognize four parts of speech, and, in geography, to know a few mountain-chains and rivers—that, and very little more. But in thirteen of the schools of this district that is the utmost which is attempted, and only in eleven schools is the complete course of primary education, as represented by the six standards, in process of being imparted. And, further, as the total number of children presented for examination in the Sixth Standard this year was only thirty-one, we see how very meagre is the work which is being done in most of our schools. As a matter of fact, most of the thirty-one scholars here referred to were presented by the two or three large town schools, the remainder of the eleven schools presenting one each. These remarks will serve to show that the education at present imparted in most of our schools is of an extremely elementary character, but this, I venture to think, would not matter so much if it were only a sound and thorough education within the limits professed. Now, I wish again to state that, in my judgment, there are schools in this district in which the scholars are well taught, and satisfactory results are secured. But such schools are not, I fear, very numerous amongst us. On the contrary in a large number of our schools it seems to me that the children only half know what they profess to know, their knowledge is not intelligent knowledge, they cannot reproduce it, or apply it, or stand a test in it. Day after day is spent within the school walls, but so spent that when the time of examination arrives, and the Inspector makes his annual visit, their failure to answer is often so complete that his mental exclamation is, “These children know nothing, and can do nothing!” How true all this is, is indicated by Table I., which shows that a class of a hundred children, professing even such small attainments as those of Standard III., will only furnish forty-four successful scholars—in other words, fifty-six of them will break down, and show themselves ignorant of the year’s work, whilst, if a like number be presented for a standard only one degree higher, as many as sixty-eight will break down. If, now, it be remembered that this is the average result, and that, as there are some schools where the results are much better than this, so there must be schools where the failures are even more numerous, and some in which they are much more numerous, it will be plain how very low is the state of education in some of our schools, and how, in fact, it is almost a misnomer to call it education at all. I have thus ventured to speak out plainly on the condition of our schools as I find them, and I think I should hardly be fulfilling my duty if I did not add something on what I deem to be the chief cause of this low state of education amongst us. No doubt allowance must be made for the fact that some of these schools have only recently been established, and have not yet had time to mature their results, doubtless, also, still greater allowance must be made for the inability under which teachers labour in consequence of the very irregular manner in which many children attend school, but when all due allowance has been made for these drawbacks, I believe the chief cause of the little good that is actually being done is, in plain English, the inefficiency of many of the teachers, their want of industry and energy, their ignorance of the best methods of imparting what they know, but, above all, their want of scholarship, and that, if we are going really to educate the children of this colony, we must exercise greater care in the selection of our teachers, and endeavour to raise the tone of scholarship amongst them.

Teachers often complain of the difficulty of educating their children up to the requirements of the standards. That a considerable variety of work is demanded of teachers to enable their scholars fully to meet these requirements, I do not deny, but, in my judgment, there is little or no difficulty in the subjects themselves. The knowledge required of the children is of such an elementary character that any teacher who has a thorough knowledge of the subjects needs nothing but application to insure the success of his pupils. But it is just this thorough knowledge of the subjects that is so often lacking in the instructor. To such a one, a very elementary question looms up as something extremely formidable and difficult. On the other hand, you may know the man who is thoroughly master of his subject, and has thoroughly digested it, by the light and easy way in which he handles his theme—he knows how to place it in the most striking light, or, rather, in a dozen different lights successively, so that the obscure becomes distinct, and the dry and repulsive interesting. A thought quickly finds entrance into the mind of the scholar when it is already fusing in the mind of the teacher. I venture to think that the extraordinary interest that attaches to the popular lectures of such famous scientific men as Huxley and Tyndall is due almost entirely to the experimental and personal acquaintance they have with the subject-matter of their teaching; and that if our country teachers knew the elements of arithmetic and grammar, for example, as these men know their physiology and physics, they would have no difficulty in kindling the intelligence of their scholars, or in imparting to them the requisite knowledge of facts. Or, to put the same thought in another way, a teacher, in order to teach effectively and bring his scholars on, must know a great deal more of his subject than the little that his scholars are required to know, and it is just the absence of this additional knowledge in the teacher that makes the pupil’s lot so hard and his progress so slow. How painful, for example, must be the mental efforts of a child compelled to dig out a smattering of English grammar from the pages of a text-book under a teacher whose own knowledge is limited to the contents of the book in question, and how different the state