

on this subject, the true teacher will be thorough in all that he does, and will not be content with anything less than thoroughness on the part of his pupils. Before passing from this subject I should like to refer to an erroneous notion that prevails—I fear even in the minds of some teachers—as to the results which may fairly be looked for from our scholars, and the character of the education to be given in our schools. Because these are described as elementary schools, it seems to be thought by some that only the barest elements of any subject need be taught, and that for an Inspector to look for thorough knowledge in any subject is unreasonable. I am sure this is the thought that exists half-recognised in the minds of many who should know better. Such a theory is in my judgment erroneous and mischievous in the highest degree. Our schools are elementary schools in the sense that only English subjects are taught in them, not in the sense that only a very little is done in any subject. No man of well-trained mind will be content to put before his pupils only the simplest and easiest cases of his subject. If he teaches arithmetic, for example, he will not rest until he has made the theory of it clear to the youngest or dumbest mind, so that, within the limits prescribed, the child shall be able to answer any but exceptionally hard questions. No lower ideal than this should satisfy any of us—anything less will be felt to be unworthy of him by the true teacher. And we may go even further, and say that, to those scholars who stay their full time in our schools and complete their course, our teachers may reasonably be expected to teach the subjects they profess with some degree of completeness, so that in any examination in English subjects merely our scholars should be able to hold their own even against competitors from schools of greater pretensions. Unless we are prepared to take up ground as high as this we must acknowledge that we are not really educating the youth of the colony, but only raising up a crop of smatterers, who know nothing thoroughly, not even their own ignorance.

*Discipline.*—In most of our schools a spirit of order prevails suggestive of good discipline. In only one or two is there that want of combined movements on the part of the scholars that betrays the unsystematic or feeble teacher. I should like, however, to see the practice of the children marching in and out of the schoolroom more generally adopted, as nothing tends more to promote discipline and bring before the minds of the scholars the important fact that the school forms one body, of which the teacher is the head, and which moves only at his command. A readiness to recognise lawful authority, which is the very lifeblood of a nation, may thus be early infused into the nature of those who are to be the future citizens of this colony, and hold its destinies in their hands. Time forbids we should make them acquainted with Roman story and the triumphs of Roman discipline, but we should do what we can that they may learn the lesson in another way. It is very desirable, too, that children should be trained at school to little acts of courtesy and good manners. Thus, I have been pleased to see lately in some schools the formal salute of the classes to their teacher at the close of the day, as well as the precedence given to the girls when the scholars leave the desks. In respect to more important matters it is gratifying to notice the diligent spirit of work that evidently prevails amongst the pupils of a large number of our schools, and the conscientious way in which the scholars act on the day of examination. Not often now have I to regard the contents of examination papers with suspicion from the fact that scholars were seen communicating with one another during the examination. These are the little straws that indicate the way the current is setting, and I look for still clearer results in the formation of character when our teachers shall have recognised more completely the obligation that lies upon them, in virtue of their office, to instil correct moral principles into the minds of their pupils, as the foundation of a useful and happy life for them on their entrance into the world.

*Irregular Attendance.*—My report would hardly be complete without some reference to the chronic difficulty under which our schools labour of irregular attendance on the part of the scholars. This is the one evil that is everywhere neutralising the best efforts of the State to educate the generation now growing up. It is not easy, without going more into detail than I am able to do, to show from figures the real character and magnitude of this evil; but, from statistics obtained from the Secretary's office, I find that, whilst the average quarterly roll number of pupils for the past year was 6,770, the strict average quarterly attendance was only 5,002, showing that the actual attendance was but 73·9 per cent. of the possible attendance. This may be interpreted in various ways. Strictly, it means that the attendance is such as would be equivalent to one child in every four stopping at home altogether; or, what would come to the same arithmetical result, but would much more nearly represent what actually takes place, to every child stopping at home one day in four; or, still better, to every second child stopping away half his time. It is not necessary, however, to say more in order to demonstrate the existence of an evil which is too notorious and too clamant to be gainsaid. The problem is to find a remedy for it—a problem I have often pondered. There is no doubt that, whilst the high price of labour, the poverty of parents, and bad roads in winter time have something to do with producing the mischief, the root of the evil is the indifference of many parents to the educational welfare of their children. Parents who are naturally indolent or without habits of reflection permit their children to stay at home on the most frivolous pretext, or no pretext at all; and it does not appear that there is any direct means of interfering with such people and compelling them to do their duty. The compulsory clause of the Education Act seems inoperative, chiefly because Committees will not incur the odium of putting it in force against their neighbours; and, if this problem is to be solved by the exercise of compulsion, it is, I believe, the Parliament of the colony, and not the Committee of the school, that must take upon itself the responsibility of enforcing attendance. Another reason, however, for the present compulsory clause failing to reach the evil, at least, in country districts, lies in this: that it applies only to those families that reside within two miles of the schoolhouse, whereas in most of our country schools a large proportion of the scholars come from a greater distance than this. Indeed, in this education district there is one school where every family attending it, save one, resides more than two miles from the schoolhouse. In view of these facts it has been suggested that some good might be done by modifying the present compulsory clause so as to make it apply to all scholars