

There are a few changes which I think desirable, and chiefly with the object of making the school work more interesting, attractive, intellectual, and generally less burdensome to both teachers and pupils. Again and again have I noted that school life is not bright enough for young folks. Boys and girls are not in danger of being overworked, as many suppose, but of being overbored by the wearisome dullness of much of their daily occupation. Amongst the dull work of a school which damps a pupil's taste for learning I may instance the writing of pages in a copy-book, long spelling or dictation exercises, home work, object-lessons given without the object, reading over and over again the same narrative, much freehand drawing, a great deal of geography and English history as often taught by getting it up from books, long-continued work in the same processes of arithmetic, much transcription, and the dry details of formal grammar. To these we may add the amazing difficulty (for which our schools are not responsible) presented to a boy's mind by the variety of coins, and weights and measures, and rules and methods in arithmetic, which the introduction of a decimal system would sweep away, and not only make the teaching of arithmetic a simpler and more rational instruction, but also save annually thousands of pounds to the State on education alone. On the other hand, class singing, experimental science, object and geometrical drawing, the cultivation of observation, mental arithmetic, reading to the class by the teacher, open-air exercises, stories from English history or full descriptions of stirring events, and the cultivation of the habit of easy and correct speaking, may always be made interesting and useful. I do not mean to say that all school work can be made positively palatable to all children, but I am quite sure that much of the wearisome bitterness of learning can be done away with, and that school life can be made thoroughly enjoyable. Nay, it is so now in some places, and I can point to classes from which children cannot be induced to stay away. They love their teachers and they love their work. Again, a fact which bears out much of what has been said is this: that in certain schools, on certain days, when a popular science or geometrical drawing lesson is to be given, or a potter's wheel or a magic lantern exhibited, or when the teacher is to read a description of the taking of Gibraltar or a passage from "Sandford and Merton," no pupils are absent. The time was when it used to be stated, and generally admitted, that the work of schools was excusably weak because the attendance was irregular; whereas now it is known that as is the teaching so is the attendance. Not long ago the head teacher of one of the city schools told me that he had one teacher of his staff who showed much less aptitude for teaching than the others, and that on any day there were more children absent from that one class than from all the other classes put together. This year we have the striking result of two of the largest and best schools in the district presenting for examination every child on the books, though the examination lasted a week in each case—a result which I need hardly say does not arise from mere accident or good fortune, but from the pleasant unities of action which animate and sustain the whole life of the school.

The sum of £50, which the Board placed in my hands for purchasing in England illustrations and material for school use, has served a good purpose. Many head teachers have taken great pride in the wall-furnishing of the class rooms, and there is generally a marked improvement in the upkeep of many schools. I should like to see now an effort made to provide more suitable material for science lessons, and to put up convenient cabinets for holding the collections made.

In addition to the annual examination of all the schools I have found time to pay a visit of inspection to thirty-two out of the seventy-two. The work of preparation for school examination, of setting papers, of examining returns and collecting information, of writing reports and correspondence, of the planning and arrangements for furnishing schools, of the examination of pupil-teachers, and of attending to many incidental matters which come before me, necessarily takes up some of my time; and it is now quite clear to me that the increased work would be better for closer inspection and fuller direction. The examination work alone of 10,460 children is a great strain upon one Inspector, and I feel that it will be impossible to overtake the increased work of another year. Besides, if the more useful work of supervision, direction, assistance, and inspection is entered into, there is full occupation now for an Assistant Inspector; and, if I am relieved from much of the standard examination work, I hope to be able to examine the class work more fully, to supervise pupil-teachers' instruction, to assist in further improving the up-keep of schools, to give more frequent and sometimes more prolonged inspection of weak schools, and to give more thought and study to other matters pertaining to the efficiency of the system.

J. R. Blair, Esq., Chairman, Education Board.

I have, &c.,
ROBERT LEE.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	91	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	458	12	17	78	351	13 11
" V. ...	769	15	15	55	684	12 10
" IV. ...	1,194	39	48	164	943	12 0
" III. ...	1,402	48	90	225	1,039	11 0
" II. ...	1,840	73	80	139	1,548	9 9
" I. ...	1,450	54	21	28	1,347	8 6
Preparatory ...	3,256	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	10,460	241	271	689	5,912	*

* Mean of average age of Standard I. to Standard VI., 11 years 4 months.