

examination to forward to the Registrar of the district the names of any parents or guardians whose children had not been present at half the school meetings during the year (unless the absence was caused through illness), and it should then be the duty of the Registrar to strike off the electoral roll the names of such persons. The best remedy for irregularity of attendance, however, is to be found in making the school attractive to the scholars; for if once their sympathies can be enlisted in the cause they will evince so strong a disinclination to stay away from school that few parents would be willing to compel them to do so: this, and the exercise of tact and discretion by the teacher in his intercourse with parents who are disposed to be careless on this point, will go far to remove this vexatious obstacle to progress from the skilful teacher's path.

PLAYGROUND SUPERVISION.—This is a matter that is very properly regarded by the Department as of the first importance, and it is made one of the special topics of the "Inspection Report." It is, indeed, a subject which deserves far more attention than it generally receives. Some, and not unfrequently very good teachers in other respects, seem to consider that they have no concern with their scholars excepting when they are before them in class. There can scarcely be a greater mistake than this if the outcome of our education system is not to be what its enemies predict, the production of a nation of clever rogues and "larrikins." The exclusion of all kinds of religious teaching from our schools renders it the more necessary (in the eyes of an earnest and conscientious teacher) to make use of every legitimate means of inculcating at least the morality of pure religion, and checking the first indications of selfishness, meanness, greediness, or petty tyranny, and other childish manifestations of the inherent tendency to self-seeking which is at the root of all vice and crime. No better opportunity for doing this can be found than that which can be made by the observant and sympathetic teacher out of the sports, pastimes, and disputes of the playground, and that, too, without undue interference with the rational amount of liberty without which the term "playground" would be an obvious misnomer.

"But how, in the name of common-sense," some bewildered teacher of a small school may say, "can I do anything of the kind? I have seven different classes to teach without assistance, and fourteen different subjects to teach them in twenty-five hours a week. During the recess I am employed in examining exercise-books, and cannot find a moment to spare in the playground." All this may be perfectly true; but if your heart is in your work—if you are not teaching a school because there is no other way in which you can get a comfortable living, but because you have deliberately chosen it as the vocation most congenial to your nature,—then, no matter how embarrassing your task may be, you will find some way of performing this most important duty even by sacrificing a portion of what you may have regarded as your leisure hours. A really conscientious teacher has no leisure hours as long as anything is undone.

It is a common remark of persons engaged in laborious occupations, mechanical pursuits, or in business offices, &c., with regard to teachers, "Oh, they have jolly fine times! Only five hours a day for five days a week, besides any amount of holidays; while I have to work eight hours at least for six days and no holidays." Every teacher's own conscience will tell him to what extent this is true in his own case; and it is true of all teachers who enter the school just at the time it opens, and put on their hats (or bonnets) and walk away as the clock strikes the hour for closing, thinking no more about the children under their charge than if they were so many sheep, until the next opening of the school, and who, in short, perform their duties in a half-hearted and perfunctory manner; but to the truly qualified teacher (not necessarily with any of the letters of the alphabet after his name) the remarks of our laborious friend are wholly inapplicable. The few hours a day during which the children are bodily present with him represent but a portion of the time which he is devoting to their service, and, to say nothing of the innumerable worries, petty annoyances, and vexatious interference of parents, &c., to which he is daily and hourly exposed, the lot of the mechanic, merchant's clerk, or labourer is far easier and too often far better remunerated than that of the not wholly ideal teacher of whom I am speaking.

If, however, supervision in recess is not an easy matter in a small school, it should be attended by no difficulty in large ones. Yet in this respect the Blenheim School is very unsatisfactory, owing partly, I believe, to the mistaken system of dual control. There cannot be two captains to one ship, nor two *head* teachers under one roof if the best possible discipline and order are to be expected. I hold that the head teacher of any school should have entire control over every other teacher in the school, and should be at liberty—nay, it should be his duty—to direct the services of his subordinates to any part of the school work to which he considers them most fitted; and under such circumstances nothing would be more easier than to tell-off the staff, two at a time (by rotation), to remain on the school premises during the mid-day recess—not sitting down comfortably reading a novel or doing fancy-work, nor even engaged in private study, but moving constantly about the playground or any parts of the building where children are allowed to remain, and watching over their conduct with scrupulous and unceasing vigilance. This would be work indeed, and perhaps hard work, but in a school with a staff of ten or upwards no teacher would as a rule take this duty more than once a week, and that ought not to be regarded as a hardship by any of the staff. Whether or not, some such arrangement must be made without delay and rigidly adhered to, and I hope the Board will take such steps as it may deem fit to enforce it at once.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES.—These useful, almost necessary, adjuncts to a good school are not numerous in this district. I think the Board should endeavour to rouse an interest in this matter by bringing again under the notice of Committees the provision of clause 57 of the Act, which many may have forgotten or overlooked. Anything that will encourage a taste for reading amongst our young people may well be regarded as a fitting object for the attention of the Board and for assistance from its funds, and this was recognised and wisely provided for by the Legislature when framing the Act of 1877. There are good libraries at Canvastown and Picton. That the principal school in the district should be destitute of this invaluable auxiliary is not very creditable to the district, and I trust that the reproach will ere long be removed.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Marlborough.

JOHN SMITH, Inspector.