

rule, well taken care of, and on only one occasion had I to report extensive damage caused by gross carelessness or wanton abuse. Rapid depreciation of property takes place and much trouble is caused to teachers by the frequency with which dancing and other functions are held in the schools.

The annual examination of pupil-teachers was held in June. In some of the larger schools the instruction of the pupil-teachers in general knowledge and in the special subject of school management is satisfactory, but in others, and in the smaller schools generally, there is much room for improvement. Careful inquiry by the Board after the last examination showed that in many cases the instruction had not been systematic and thorough, and in some cases there had been culpable neglect. In teaching school management teachers too often leave the preparation of notes of lessons till shortly before the examination, and consequently the lessons are poorly prepared, are not practised before a class and criticized, and the principles are not assimilated so that they can be applied to actual teaching. Notes of lessons, demonstration before a class, and criticism lessons should be undertaken as soon as the results of the pupil-teachers' examination are known, for they aim at producing increased skill which will manifest itself in the school work. Neglect and delay, on the contrary, make our pupil-teachers bad teachers and confirm them in unskilful and unintelligent methods. Most of our pupil-teachers are earnest in their work, and, where they receive satisfactory instruction, some teach with considerable skill. With average ability, a fourth-year pupil-teacher in a good school is quite capable of undertaking responsible work. The practice of grouping the pupil-teachers for their examination in school management was somewhat extended during the past year and with good results. The Board's new regulations regarding pupil-teachers are bearing fruit, and it must be gratifying to the Board to find that all the pupil-teachers who passed their final examination in June last obtained their full certificates at the January examination this year.

The examination for scholarships was held in December, and the work as a whole was very disappointing. Though in the pass-subjects fair proficiency was shown, in the class-subjects the work was poor in the extreme.

The percentage of attendance, though showing an increase, is still low compared with the percentages of other districts. A slight rise or fall may be due to a more or less careful purging of the rolls, but I believe that the gradual rise, year by year, is due to more regular attendance. The causes of bad attendance, exclusive of bad roads and inclement weather, may be classed under two heads—(1) The home circumstances of the pupils, and (2) the school and its authorities. Under the first head I may mention parental indifference or neglect and excessive work required from children of very tender years. I know that during the milking season some children have to milk as many as ten cows every morning, and, if they come to school at all, arrive late, and are so fatigued as to be unfit for the work of the day. Though I regret the fact, I am afraid that in some cases there is no just remedy, as in some of the outlying districts the struggle for existence is harder than many people imagine. I was told by one teacher that children at his school had to gather fungus during the day in order that the bare necessities of life might be procured for the families, and I have no reason for doubting his word. The Board has appointed truant-inspectors to deal with cases of truancy and parental neglect, but upon compulsion alone too much reliance should not be placed. Under the second of the above heads there is ample scope for attraction. When a school building is ill-lighted, gloomy, and depressing one cannot wonder at children preferring to stay away more than at their preferring sunshine to dulness. Then by all means let our schools be cheerful, bright, and attractive, and let the walls be covered with interesting and instructive charts and pictures such as will arouse and sustain curiosity. Again, organization may help the attendance. Let the first impressions of the school-day be pleasant ones. Let us have means by which the children may amuse themselves during the recesses and before school opens, and they will, if possible, come early and regularly for a brief interval of companionship and amusement. Before the real work of the day is begun, let the pupils perform a few extension exercises, sing a few songs, or "work in play." Again, the personality of the teacher is a well-known factor in producing good or bad attendance. Lack of sympathy, harshness, carelessness, and incompetency will inevitably lower the attendance. Attendance-prizes given by the Committee are found very beneficial. These may take various forms—*e.g.*, books, inexpensive certificates showing a photo. of a group of the pupils obtaining prizes, small certificates given to every child making full attendance during a week, and a number of these to entitle to a more valuable reward. Quarterly reports on the progress, punctuality, and conduct of the pupils are often effective, as they serve to increase the parents' interest in the school work. Again, in the larger schools, emulation between class and class may be tried. Week by week the percentages of attendance made in the different classes may be shown on a board kept for the purpose, and the class with the highest percentage may be allowed some privilege during the following week (as getting away a little earlier on Friday afternoon).

Before leaving the question of attendance I should like to point out that there is a defect which needs remedying before the clauses of "The School Attendance Act, 1894," can attain maximum efficiency. The term "attendance" should be more exactly defined. At present it denotes a period dependent upon the time at which the roll is marked. The instructions on the registers state that the roll must be marked not later than an hour and a half after the opening of the school. The times fixed by the teachers are usually 10.50 a.m. and 2.30 p.m., and a child arriving a little earlier is marked present. Now, as our schools may be dismissed at 3 p.m., a child by attending a little over an hour and a half per day for three days may make six attendances, and the parents will evade prosecution. Or take an extreme case: a pupil by attending a little over half an hour on every afternoon and a little over an hour one morning may be recorded as having complied with the Act, whereas the total time spent under instruction may be about only three hours and a half for the week. I am not prepared to say that extreme cases such as the above do