

coincident with the closing of the schools, and the progress of the classes was hampered by the inconsiderateness of those who would not be ill with the crowd, but required a special time for themselves. It is only those that have come through the experience of such a year that can justly estimate the enormous strain entailed on the teachers in such circumstances; and had not our teachers been endowed with a greater degree of patience and resourcefulness than they are sometimes credited with, the work of the year would have suffered much beyond what it actually did.

The work of the schools has also suffered to a very great extent by the numerous changes of teachers that have occurred. In twenty-six schools—that is, in more than one-third of the total number—such changes have taken place; and there was not only the disadvantage of the interruption and dislocation of work through the going of one teacher and the coming of another, but in most cases there was also an intensification of the disadvantage because of the intervening period when the school was in the hands of a temporary teacher. Many of the changes were internal, teachers being transferred from one school to another within the district itself, but they were not all of this kind. We have lost about a dozen teachers of our own training, most of whom had given every satisfaction in their positions; and we have drawn from other districts a corresponding number of teachers, whose usefulness, we trust, will be at least equal to that of those whose places they have taken.

Reviewing the work of the year as a whole, we feel ourselves justified in reporting that it was as satisfactory as might be expected under circumstances that, as we have shown, were far from favourable. We do not intend to give a detailed criticism with regard to the several subjects of instruction; the defects and the excellences are such as we have more than once commented on in previous reports. During our inspection and examination visits we have taken every opportunity of giving, as far as lay in our power, help and guidance to those who seemed to need our services, and we are pleased to testify to the good grace with which our criticisms and suggestions have been received. As we go from school to school we never divest ourselves of the privilege of being teachers, and as such we aim at being something more than gaugers of the amount of knowledge of any subject that the children possess. Our business with a class is not done when we have made up our minds that “inferior,” “good,” or some such expression is to be entered against the subject in hand; that conclusion is often arrived at long before we cease our questioning, which, as most teachers have learned to know, is continued as a lesson for them—a lesson by example—and therefore more likely to be effectual than a lecture on how it should be done. We are learners also, and when we pick up something new and good from one teacher we are delighted to pass it on to others.

During the year sixteen schools earned capitation for “handwork,” the classes in which this work has been carried on being, with one or two exceptions, the preparatory classes and Standards I. and II. In other schools besides the sixteen that earned capitation manual instruction in various forms has been given, so that in reality the district has been doing more in this direction than will appear in any formal returns. Owing partly to the deficiency of desk accommodation in the infant departments of some of the large schools, and partly to the unsuitableness of the ordinary school-desks for some of the occupations, the instruction has not been carried on under very favourable conditions. Teachers are wisely waiting for the promised new standard syllabus before introducing handwork into the upper standards.

Classes for the training of teachers in brush drawing, modelling in plasticine, and woodwork were held for a term of twelve lessons, Mr. W. Greene being instructor in brush drawing and modelling, and Mr. W. Parr in woodwork. The brush-work classes had a roll number of eighty-three teachers of both sexes, and the modelling classes of seventy-seven, the attendance at the classes being well maintained throughout the course. There were forty-four men on the roll of the woodwork classes, but the attendance of several members was irregular. Though there is no fee for instruction, and free railway travelling is granted to those attending the classes, many of the teachers are put to great inconvenience to be able to attend, and all exercise some self-denial in giving up their Saturday holiday for the sake of the classes. Under the Education Board as controlling authority, classes have been carried on by the Timaru and Waimate Technical Classes Associations, and negotiations are now in progress for the establishment of similar classes at Temuka, a former attempt in that centre not having met with sufficient support.

Remote as they are from the great heart of the Empire, the children have been deeply interested in the notable events of the year. They followed with close attention the exciting incidents in the final operations against the Boers, and recognised with pride the gallant stand made by South Canterbury lads during the wild night rush of De Wet's riders at Bothasberg. They shared in the general rejoicings over the termination of the long struggle in South Africa. They took their part in the preparations for worthily celebrating the coronation of the King; with their elders they experienced the awful suspense when the King drew near to death; and in their hearts awoke a new feeling of love and loyalty to the King when, the danger past, he was at last crowned in far Westminster Abbey. Unsettling factors these so far as ordinary school-work is concerned, but not without their effect in widening the mental horizon of the children, in deepening their sympathies, and in strengthening the ties that bind the colonies to the Motherland.

We have, &c.,

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A. BELL, M.A., }

The Chairman, Education Board, Timaru.