

Improvement is manifest in the teaching of science; but it is still scarcely recognised that a well-equipped (but not necessarily expensive) laboratory is an essential for every secondary school. It can hardly be said yet that the teaching of science is founded upon the only true basis—namely, individual experiment and observation by the pupils themselves. In a few of the schools, it is true, this method is adopted, and in some is carried out in an excellent manner; but one still now and then meets with such anomalies in science lessons as the setting of boys and girls to learn from a book certain information on a scientific subject, the setting of questions so as to enable them to put such information into the best form for reproduction at an examination, and then, finally, as a kind of plum, the exhibition by the teacher of what is called an experiment, presumably to try or test whether, after all, what is stated in the book is approximately true, for measurement and preciseness are in such cases usually not thought of as elements in the question. So extreme a case is, of course, rare, but it will serve as an example to illustrate how science should not be taught, but yet is, unfortunately, sometimes treated.

Geometry and other branches of mathematics are taught for the most part on the old formal lines, and although consequently the most has not been made of these subjects, yet by their very nature the educational effect of so treating them has been less harmful than the conservatism that has prevailed in the teaching of languages and science. Indeed, the plea that is often put forward as an excuse for the non-adoption of new methods in mathematical teaching derives a good deal of force from the fact that in the examinations of the University of New Zealand any movement in that direction has hitherto been distinctly discouraged, if not rendered almost impossible. But it is satisfactory to note that recent changes in the syllabus prescribed for the entrance examinations of the University indicate a tendency to move—even though but a little way at present—in the direction of reform. I trust, however, that the example set by the University of Cambridge in the adoption of a more modern programme of mathematics in its "Previous Examination" may soon be followed by our own University.

The above remarks suggest one difficulty that all the authorities of the secondary schools feel in regard to their work—namely, the necessity (supposed or real) of subordinating it in a large degree to the Matriculation and Junior Scholarship examinations. These examinations are held by the University presumably as tests for those who are about to enter its doors as students in one or other of its University colleges; they are not necessarily suited to be leaving-examinations for the pupils of secondary schools, nine-tenths of whom never intend to enter the University at all. The secondary schools exist quite as much for the nine-tenths who do not go to the University as for the one-tenth (or, perhaps, hardly more than one-twentieth) who do; and their programmes should be drawn up, therefore, otherwise than on the assumption that they are merely feeders of the University. Possibly, governing bodies and parents need education in regard to this aspect of the question quite as much as the staffs of the schools, for there is certainly an impression among the latter that the public demand from every school a respectable number of passes in the University entrance examinations, and measure the school almost solely by its performances thereat.

The harmful effect of the dominating influence that these examinations exercise over the curriculum of the secondary schools is intensified by the fact that the questions set do not always encourage the most modern or enlightened ways of teaching the various subjects, but in some cases even give a distinct handicap to those taught upon methods that are generally considered to be out of date.

The proportion of time given to the various subjects of the school course does not vary quite so much perhaps as one would expect in secondary schools so different in size, in management, and in organization; but the details are so diverse that it is almost impossible to give a synopsis of the time-tables in vogue at the several schools.

Omitting one or two of the very smallest schools, it will be found, however, that the following table shows with a fair degree of accuracy the amount of time devoted to the most prominent subjects in the upper, middle, and lower classes of a course which may be taken roughly as a five-years' course:—

Subject.	Time (mean for all Schools), in Hours per Week.		
	Upper Classes.	Middle Classes.	Lower Classes.
English (25 schools)	4·68	4·25	6·14
Latin (25 schools)	5·00	3·86	3·25
			(12 schools)
French (25 schools)	3·56	3·04	2·74
			(24 schools)
German (4 schools)	2·67	2·38	1·63
Mathematics (25 schools)	6·68	5·86	5·45
Science (23 schools)	3·64	2·39	1·25
			(18 schools)

District High Schools.

It is doubtful whether any district high school should be established where there is not a prospect of the attendance of at least twenty pupils. When that number is reached it becomes possible, with the grants given in accordance with the regulations under the Public School Teachers' Salaries Act, to staff and organize the secondary classes.

Considerable difference exists in various parts of the colony as regards the staffing of such schools. With the same grants some schools seem to secure sufficient staffing, while others have certainly not made such an increase to the staff of an ordinary public school as the circumstances demand.