

OTAGO.

REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL FOR THE YEAR 1913.

SIR,—

Training College, 17th December, 1913.

I beg to submit my report on the work of the Training College for 1913.

During the year there were 119 students in attendance. Of these, forty-five were second-year students (fifteen males and thirty females) and seventy-four were first-year students (twenty-one males and fifty-three females). Of these latter, one left and one obtained leave—both on account of sickness.

The senior students had all been pupil-teachers or probationers, but of the seventy-four junior students no less than twenty-seven had not had that experience, this number including three graduates. I found, as I had been led to expect from my experience as head teacher of the Normal School, that those who had not been pupil-teachers or probationers were greatly handicapped in the pedagogical part of their College course. They had not the same attitude of mind in regard to the teaching of children as the others had. Such students do not understand the problem they have to face in teaching children, and it is hard to make them understand it at College, for it is in the practical testing and teaching in actual school life that its nature is driven home.

At present there is a considerable disparity in the numbers of first- and second-year students respectively—viz., seventy-four and forty-five—due largely to the increase in the number of extra admissions under the changed regulations. This variation of number causes considerable inconvenience: for example, the class-rooms of the College have been built to hold forty and fifty, so that the junior students had to frequently meet in the auditorium instead, and in some classes had to be split up into two divisions. The College was built for eighty students, and is much too small in every way for the present number. A wave of the Department's wand may easily swell the number of students, but the accommodation refuses to swell.

In regard to University work, I was faced by the problem (which was solved largely at haphazard) of how to judge of the fitness of the student to undertake the work of the various classes. There are the factors of health, ability, willingness, and time to be considered. The first of these is supposed to be guaranteed by a doctor's certificate, which in some cases I found was an uncertain guide. Ability and ambition were the unknown factors, especially the latter. The result was, as is I suppose the case in all colleges, that some students found the course they took too heavy for their health, and others seemed to wish to take the class but avoid the work. I have much pleasure in stating, however, that the great majority made a very good attempt to cope with their work, and some had rather to be restrained than encouraged. The distribution of University subjects was approximately as follows: Forty-four took C English, fifty-three took education, thirty-two took junior English, seventeen took senior Latin, thirty-three took junior Latin, ten took senior French, seven took junior French, sixteen took junior mental science, fourteen took mathematics, thirty-two economics, two mechanics, three physics, two geology, and forty-nine home science for D. The results, not counting home science, were 183 passes—viz., eight first-class, sixty-one second-class, and 114 third-class.

Considering that very full demands were made on the time of the students by their College work, I regard the above result as on the whole satisfactory. About 10 per cent. did unsatisfactory work, due to various causes. Six junior students sat for a section of the B.A. degree, and twelve seniors.

There was a considerable amount of eye-trouble among the students, due, I should think, to bad attitudes and studying by gaslight. The combination of University work and College work causes a considerable rush towards the end of the year, especially in the cases of the more ambitious students. It would ease matters considerably and be more satisfactory from every point of view if promising students were granted a third year to take a section of their degree or to complete it. In that case the students could easily be classified at the end of their first year, and the less promising confined more strictly to College work, while the work of the more studious section would be more thorough, and not wear the aspect of "cram" which it does under present circumstances. The University bursaries up to £20 do little to help in this direction, for obvious reasons.

In regard to science-teaching, little can be done in connexion with the University owing to the policy of having day classes in science subjects. I am providing for the science-teaching of women students by working in with the home-science department of the University, which has most obligingly met me in every way. The juniors take home science for D for three hours a week, and the seniors domestic science II for C for about four hours weekly. The latter will rank as a University class.

The junior men take physical measurements and the seniors agriculture, while both junior men and women take nature-study one hour a week. I have been struck with the ignorance both of science and literature displayed by the first-year students. The most familiar scientific generalizations are often strange to them. Of twenty-one junior men only one man had heard of Cleopatra and could tell me that Shakspeare had written a play involving that character. I believe the reason given is that first matriculation work, then teaching and the preparation for a certificate take up all their time, enough being left only for the necessary amount of exercise.

It seems to me that the prevailing fashion of examination both before and during the University courses neglects the matter of literature for the form, which can be largely crammed from notes, and the absurdity prevails that in preparing for a course of English literature there is no time to read the books, too many of which are usually set. I intend this forthcoming session