

The rule of the Board requiring those desirous of entering the service to interview the Inspectors has been strictly observed. The increasing scarcity of teachers willing to fill the lower positions accounts for the appearance of many raw applicants, whose only claim to consideration rests upon the passing of the proficiency examination years ago. We are pleased to say, however, that we have been able to select for small schools some adults whose intelligence, industry, and willingness to learn give promise of their becoming useful members of the teaching service. Two returned soldiers have received appointments in small schools, and others may receive similar appointments. All such applicants should recognize the need for equipping themselves for their work by steady application to study, and by using to the utmost the opportunity afforded them of gaining practical experience. It is gratifying to be able to report that a large number of promising young people have applied for appointment as pupil-teachers or probationers.

The usual classes for teachers were held during the year. Speaking generally, we are of the opinion that they have been less effective than formerly. Unpunctuality was too much in evidence, while a good many students were required to refund the cost of the railway ticket for absenting themselves from classes. A perusal of the reports of the instructors confirms these indications of aimlessness on the part of some of the students, whose note-books also showed a lack of attention to class-work. Doubtless this complacency towards progress in study is in large measure a condition incidental to the present abnormal scarcity of teachers. To raise the efficiency of these classes it will probably be necessary in future to regulate admission by a reference to the attendance registers and to the reports of the instructors. The elimination of those that have proved irregular in attendance or indifferent as to their studies will strengthen the hands of the instructors, who are competent and zealous, and who deserve commendation for their sustained efforts to assist young teachers to qualify themselves for their work.

On the subject of the Great War now raging in the Old World the pupils have been keenly alert. By the aid of lessons of instruction regularly given by the teachers, and of the enlightening articles appearing in the *School Journal* and the newspapers, the pupils generally have acquired a good knowledge of the causes and the principal events of the strife, and of the geography of its theatre. More important still, the deepening of the national sentiment and the stirring of the emotional impulses, accentuated in many districts by the sight of returning wounded soldiers, have found an outlet in different forms of practical sympathy. Belgian Day resulted in a collection from the schools of £1,700. Efforts more or less systematic have been made in the direction of sewing, knitting, making bandages, &c., for the wounded. In at least one school all the boys learned to knit. Steps were taken, however, to prevent the pupils from taking part in the sale of art-union tickets. We may also mention that a grass-seed campaign has been organized by the agricultural instructor.

On account of the shortage of labour consequent upon the departure of so many young men to the front, the Board gave permission to School Committees to revert for one year to harvest holidays. Such considerations as the efficiency of school-work and the equal treatment of teachers impel us to express the hope that this relaxation of the holiday regulations will be only temporary.

School registers have with few exceptions been neatly and carefully kept. Many of our teachers by the force of example are instilling into the minds of the pupils a predilection for habits of tidiness and orderly arrangement. On the other hand, the overcrowded drawer of the school-table and the untidiness of the school-cupboard almost invariably find their parallel in the school-desk.

In most schools the playgrounds are kept in a tidy condition. There are instances, however, where luncheon-papers are allowed to litter the playing-areas. From the point of view of health, too, it is essential that all the outbuildings of every school should be inspected daily by the teacher; the neglect of this has frequently resulted in the prevalence of insanitary conditions.

Teachers in this district are now required to present a signed list of the class-books used in their schools. Instances were found in which unauthorized books were in use, but the default in this respect was due largely to a desire on the part of teachers to use up the stock in hand of old text-books that had in former years been on the authorized list. At the same time there were schools which used class-books that had never been authorized. As the Board has recently issued a circular to teachers clearly defining the position, it is hoped that there will be no further irregularity. A supply of new continuous readers for Classes P to S4 is shortly to be ordered.

There is still some friction between teachers and parents in regard to home-work. Whilst we have discouraged the setting of written home-work in the preparatory and junior divisions, we believe that written home-work is really beneficial in the senior division, provided that it is limited in quantity and that it is carefully marked by the teacher.

The annual classification of the pupils by the head teachers sometimes causes heartburnings where pupils have not been promoted. We need only say, however, that teachers have almost invariably been fully justified where they have refused promotion; in our opinion, if they have erred in their judgment it has been in the direction not of severity but of leniency. In some cases teachers have during the course of the year attempted to rectify their classification by reducing to a lower standard pupils who had received tentative promotion at the beginning of the year. Such a policy is apt to produce friction; and, after all, it ought to be possible for the head teacher to make a sound classification at the beginning of the year on the result of his annual and term examinations. At the instance of the Inspectors the Board has advised head teachers in no case to reduce the classification of any pupil later than the month of May, when the first term examination is held.

We regret to notice that there is a growing tendency to estimate the efficiency of a school solely by the success of its pupils at the proficiency examinations. Such estimates not only are manifestly misleading, but are also apt to encourage tactics which every true educationist must condemn. Thus