

A few words as to the record of each may be of interest:—

The establishment of the Boys' School evidently supplied a great want, and the early records are good. There has been no change in the head-mastership for nearly 31 years, and during this long period the annual reports of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools show the highest appreciation of the School and of Mr. Henshaw personally.

In the reports are found such remarks as "This is quite a model village school" (1864); "I have seen few village schools so good as this" (1866). In 1869 Mr. Henshaw's certificate was raised "three stages in consideration of his long and successful service as an elementary teacher."

Another report says: "The high quality of the school work here continues to be remarkable, and reflects great credit upon the master and his staff" (1876).

Our present Inspector, Mr. E. N. Wix, reports in the same way:—"The discipline and tone are very good, and the School maintains its high reputation for thorough and excellent work" (1882).

An unbroken record such as this leaves nothing to be desired, and must always prove a help towards the future maintenance of so high a reputation.

The Girls' School has suffered many vicissitudes, and in its early days it was not appreciated so much as the Boys' School. Of late years, however, it has come quite to the front, and would have many more scholars if we could only take them in.

I need only speak particularly of the last four years, during which the School has been under the control of its present mistress, who, much to our regret and loss, is now about to leave. When Miss Bradford took up her appointment as mistress in January, 1888, the School was, in many respects, out of order, owing to the failure of the health of the previous mistress, and her long absence from the School; but, at the end of the first school year, the Inspector's report says: "there has been a very gratifying and creditable improvement both in the discipline and attainments of the Girls' School."

Throughout the period—January, 1888, to the present time—the kind, yet firm, hand of the mistress has made its mark; the whole tone and discipline of the School is excellent; not only in the ordinary routine of school work,

but also in useful things, such as domestic economy, the mistress has striven to interest and benefit her scholars; and one most excellent result, beyond the training and tuition of the children, is shown in this—that the mistress has won the love of those over whom she has had to rule.

When Miss Bradford married she most kindly consented to remain and see us through the critical period of the annual inspection.

I now avail myself of this opportunity of publicly expressing the warm thanks of the school managers to Mrs. Alfred Brown for all her care, attention, and good work. We, one and all, regret that our connection is about to cease; and we heartily wish Mrs. Brown every possible happiness in the future.

The Infant School has had the great advantage of thoroughly good mistresses for almost the whole period of its existence—Miss Athowe until 1868, Miss Fleming (now Mrs. Kaye) till the end of 1878, and since then Miss Callcott.

The Inspectors' annual reports speak of "good progress," of the children being "well-taught," "improving and making satisfactory progress," "good discipline" and "much care and pains in organizing varied occupations for the children," "tone and influence good, the children carefully taught." All this and more I can thoroughly endorse. I congratulate the subscribers and the parents of the infants on having a mistress in this School, who is not only thoroughly efficient and devoted to her work, but is united to the little ones by loving sympathy and an earnest desire for their true welfare.

With regard to the junior teaching staff:—That of the Boys' School is in a state of transition. The assistant-mistress, pupil-teachers, and monitresses in the Infants' and Girls' Schools are good, capable, and pains-taking: in every respect giving satisfaction to the school managers.

Next, as to our financial position:—

With the increasing requirements of the Education Code, an increasing expenditure has been necessary to maintain the required efficiency. One item of expenditure has of late been considerably increased—that for the teaching staff of the Boys' School. Pupil-teachers are not to be obtained, and assistant-masters must, therefore, be employed, at a cost nearly three times as great.

Our present position is this:—

During the past year we were able to transfer the assistant-mistress from the Infants' to the Boys' School for some months,—till we could procure a second assistant-master,—with a consequent saving to the funds of the School; the result being that the debt of £22 14s. 2d. at the beginning of the year has been reduced to £5 3s. 8d.

The actual expenditure of the past year has been £544 18s. 1d., and the actual income, £562 8s. 7d.

As a forecast for the year on which we have now entered, I estimate that we shall require for the teaching staff about £480; and for school apparatus, fuel and light, repairs, cleaning, etc., about £90; repayment of debt, £5: making a total of £575.

We do not yet know the amount of grant earned, but, taking the past year as a guide, our prospective income would be:

	£	s.	d.
Government grant - - - about	229	0	0
Fee grant and School fees - "	180	0	0
Subscriptions, <i>on present basis</i> "	122	0	0
Marshall's Charity—apprenticing a pupil-teacher - - - - -	7	10	0
Sundries - - - - -	1	10	0

Giving a total of—£540 0 0

Thus it is clear that we shall need increased support to maintain these Schools in efficiency.

Now, may I not fairly put this view forward? For full 41 years the British Schools have received a support from Sir John Lawes and Mrs. Warde that has been more than generous; they have during this period taken upon themselves a very large share of a burden that otherwise must have fallen upon the community, at all events since 1870.

Now the time has come when but one of our principal props remains, and I venture to suggest whether it does not become a duty for the community who benefit by these Schools—even if only by the mere fact of their being "Voluntary Schools"—to take up more earnestly this question of support.

I gratefully acknowledge a largely-increased support since 1886; but, to maintain the Schools on a sound footing, we ought to be able to look forward to an income equal to the necessary expenditure.

I am glad to be able to report that the general condition of the School buildings is good; that the sanitary condition is likewise good, and is carefully attended to; and that wholesome water from the waterworks has been laid on to all the Schools.

With a view to systematic working of the daily routine throughout the Schools, the managers have adopted certain school regulations, which are based upon two things—the requirements of the Education Department, and those of the local bye-laws.

The bye-laws lay down that "the parent of every child of not less than 5, nor more than 13 years of age, shall cause such child to attend school, unless there be a reasonable excuse for non-attendance"; the "reasonable excuses" for a child on the registers of any school being: "That the child has been prevented from attending school by sickness or an unavoidable cause."

And that "the time during which every child shall attend school shall be the whole time for which the school shall be open for the instruction of children." Then the penalty to which a parent is liable, "who shall not observe or shall neglect or violate these bye-laws," is, on conviction, not exceeding five shillings (including the costs) for each offence.

I would earnestly impress upon every parent that it is a distinct wrong and injury to a child to hinder its punctual attendance at school. The habit of punctuality is a most valuable one in all the business of life.

For the purpose of securing punctuality and regularity in attendance we have these "school regulations," which we expect practically to work as a mutual agreement between parents and the school managers. Our system of fines for late attendance has been adopted chiefly to bring the absence home to the parent, and as a gentle means of carrying out the bye-laws. We don't want to fall back upon the law, which puts a penalty upon the non-observance, neglect, or infraction of the bye-laws. We have nothing at heart but doing the very best we can for the children, and we ask all the parents to back us up.

The requirements of the Education Department are thus set forth in the Code:—

It is required of the managers and teachers "that all reasonable care is taken, in the ordinary management of

the school, to bring up the children in habits of punctuality, of good manners and language, of cleanliness and neatness, and also to impress upon the children the importance of cheerful obedience to duty, of consideration and respect for others, and of honour and truthfulness in word and act" (Art. 101 (b)). Very grave and important are the responsibilities here set forth, and laid upon the teachers and managers of schools. How we need all the help of parents, and all the consideration that can be shown us, I need scarcely say.

There is yet one thing dependent upon the regularity of attendance which I wish to impress upon parents, and that is that the amounts of both Government grant and fee-grant are calculated upon the average attendance of the children; it is, therefore, of the greatest importance that all parents should see that the attendance of their children is regular. Perhaps I may make this more clear when I say that the loss of each unit of average attendance means (in round numbers) £1 for boys, 17s. for girls, and 14s. for infants, on the Government grant; and 10s. a head, fee-grant—lost to the School funds for each absent unit.

A good and useful step has lately been taken in the establishment of a School Savings Bank. This was opened on the 2nd of November with great success, and is an object of much interest to the children. The numbers of depositors in the different Schools are—boys, 59; girls, 55; infants, 60—total, 174; and the amount deposited weekly is about £1 8s.

At the commencement of the present school year, viz., on Monday, the 2nd of November, these Schools came under the new Education Act, which provides that a fee-grant of 10s. may be paid for every scholar in average attendance during the school year,—the calculation being 3d. a week on 40 weeks.

Our normal school year is 44 weeks, which would make a weekly rate of less than 2½d., if calculated on the actual, instead of the average, attendance.

We reckoned our average school fees, etc., to be 15s. 7½d. So that, under the new Act, we could still charge an average fee of 5s. 7½d. a head.

We, therefore, proposed the following scheme to the parents of the scholars, and which they accepted:—That the school fees paid by boys and girls should be reduced

by 2d., and that all materials, except copy and exercise books, should be supplied free; also that the infants should pay a uniform fee of 1d. a week.

We hear and read a good deal about "public control" of these elementary schools, and I should like to say a few words on the subject.

It is often stated that the new Education Act is partial and defective, since it fails to recognise the right of public control, and does not secure that the increased grant shall be devoted to greater educational efficiency.

With regard to what is thus called the "increased grant," the statement can only refer to those rural schools in which the previous school-fees were less than the amount of the grant, and which schools have consequently become free. In our case, we cannot get one farthing of "increased grant," because, if the amount of school fees should (by any chance) exceed the calculated average, such excess would be deducted from the fee-grant.

And as to "public control," it is a fact that the public who furnish the grants, apply a very close and stringent control through their officials in the Education Department; so much so that every minute in the week's school-work is planned, noted on a time-table, approved by the district inspector, and posted up in every school-room.

The whole work of the school is carried on under the supervision of the inspector.

But, if *local management* be meant by the term "public control," I find myself in full agreement; and, with a view to extend our local management, I am authorised by the school managers to say that we propose to hold an annual meeting of subscribers, and that the management shall be annually reviewed; that is to say, that the managers shall be *annually* confirmed in the management, or others elected.

Constant changes in the management would not be advantageous, but we wish to place the matter in the hands of the subscribers in as full and unreserved a manner as we can.

I had hoped to have been able to have arranged some relaxation in the qualification for a manager, but the trust-deed of the Schools (which only came into my hands on Wednesday last) is very stringent.

It provides that a subscriber, to be entitled to vote,

must have subscribed £5, or be an annual subscriber of 10s.; and a subscriber of £20, or not less than £2 annually, is eligible for the post of manager.

The number of managers should be not less than seven, nor more than twelve, so that we should now elect *one* to complete the minimum number.

I venture to suggest to this meeting that some alteration of the trust-deed is desirable:—1. That a general meeting of the subscribers to the funds of the Schools be held annually as soon as may be convenient after the close of the school year, when the election of managers shall take place.

2. That the qualification for manager be altered *either* to an annual subscription of £1, *or* to the representative of a group of subscribers whose united subscriptions amount to £2.

Then, the school managers invite the parents of scholars to elect from their own numbers a "Parents' Committee" of not less than seven, nor more than thirteen members. This committee would form a most useful connecting link between parents and managers, and could render great assistance by its advice, by bringing forward such school matters as might want attention, and by promoting the cordial co-operation of parents, teachers, and managers.

This "Parents' Committee" might meet with advantage just before, or at the same time as the meetings of managers: the honorary secretary of the committee of management keeping the "Parents' Committee" acquainted with dates of meetings and any other necessary matters.

Thus I have endeavoured to place before you, as briefly as might be, the history of our British Schools, their present position, and outlook. I venture to say that they have done good work in the past, are doing good work now, and their work in the future, under the more direct view and influence of the subscribers, ought to move in the path of progress. To bring up the little ones in habits of duty and obedience, to attend to their moral training as well as their school-work, to strive so to guide them in their early years that they may be inclined to the things that are good and holy, and to train them so that they may become good and right-minded citizens, is a work that is well worth doing, and well worth helping in.