



No. 58.

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.

The following Annual Report on the state of the Government Schools in Hongkong, for the Year 1876, is published for general information.

By Command,

H. E. WODEHOUSE,
Acting Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 8th March, 1877.

[No. 13.]

HONGKONG, 14th February, 1877.

SIR,—I have the honour to forward to you the Annual Report on Education for 1876.

2. From the Tables that form the appendix it will be seen that there was a marked increase in the attendance at all the schools, whether taken collectively, or in accordance with the classification usually adopted in these reports. This will be best shown by the following abstract:—

Increase at all the Schools,.....	12 per cent.
Increase at the Government Schools,.....	13 „ „
Increase at the Grant-in-Aid Schools,.....	11 „ „

3. One very important feature in the history of the year is the great increase in the number of girls at the various schools. It may be stated thus:—

Increase at all the Schools,.....	27 per cent.
Increase at the Government Schools,.....	30 „ „
Increase at the Grant-in-Aid Schools,.....	25 „ „

Although the number of girls bears but a small proportion to that of boys, being only about 1 to 5, yet in a place where female education is not merely neglected but looked upon as unnecessary, if not pernicious, it is gratifying to see prejudice yielding as it is doing to the dictates of common sense and duty.

4. As regards the *Central School*, it would be superfluous to add anything to previous reports. The numbers are all but stationary; and this is due to but one cause, the want of accommodation. Applications for admission are steadily increasing, and disappointments at refusal are becoming more numerous and are being less patiently borne. As a remedy for all this cannot be far distant now, although it cannot arrive in time to affect the current year, further notice of the school, its working, its aims, and its success, may therefore be deferred until the new building is occupied, and a more extended sphere of action thus opened up to it.

5. One drawback to the efficiency of the *Village Schools* has now been very happily removed. It had long been but too evident that the masters reserved their energies for the closing weeks of the year, instead of applying themselves with sustained effort to the whole year's work; and, as it had been found that, in the Grant-in-Aid schools, the proportion of the grant which is handed to the masters has a most beneficial effect in maintaining steady application throughout the year, a modification of this plan was adopted in the case of the *Village Schools*. It amounted to this, that at the end of the year the schools were to be divided into three classes, *Very Good*, *Good*, and *Fair*; that masters whose schools were in the first rank would receive a bonus of \$25 each; those of the second \$15 each; those of the third *nil*; and all below the third were to be recommended for dismissal. The classification was to depend primarily on the result of the annual examinations, but it was to be modified by the masters' attention to discipline and other points of order, as ascertained on occasions of inspection.

6. It may be premature to found too much confidence on the result of the first year's experiment, but that result amounted to this: that more attention was paid to the work, that the number of scholars did not fall off rapidly towards the close of the year, that on no previous occasion were the scholars present on the examination day so numerous, and that the amount and quality of the work done were never so satisfactory. Five schools were placed in the first rank, nine in the second, and the remaining fifteen in the third. Two or three at the end of the last list are very poor in many ways, but there were circumstances, local and personal, connected with them that prevented the adoption of the severe measure which forms part of the scheme. It does not, therefore, follow that they will be so favourably dealt with on a future occasion. Two schools also were placed in this rank, which, if judged by the result of the examinations alone, would have been placed in the second; but the discipline was so lax that any reward to the masters would have been injurious, both to themselves and to their schools. A table with the schools now referred to arranged in the order of their efficiency will be found in its proper place in the appendix.

7. There is little to be said of these schools individually. Aberdeen alone calls for any comment. In the beginning of the year it was almost extinct, the attendance having dwindled to *four*. This continued till the month of June, at the end of which it was seriously intended to shut up the school. It so happened, however, that Mr. MATHIESON of the Police Force was then in charge of the Aberdeen Station, and seeing so many children doing nothing except getting into mischief, he remonstrated with their parents, and the consequence was that the numbers rose from 4 to 20. As a final effort towards utilizing the school, an evening class was opened in the month of July for the benefit of the Chinese police and the workmen at the Aberdeen Docks. This gave promise of being a very fortunate step. There were more applicants for admission than the schoolroom could accommodate, and considerable disappointment was occasioned thereby. The class at first numbered 34, and continued at nearly the same point for some months; but on account of the constant shifting from place to place of the scholars, and also on account of one of those outbreaks of fever from which the village hardly ever escapes in autumn, the numbers declined rapidly during the last months of the year. There is reason to believe, moreover, that the master is far from blameless for the falling off, but how to find a better man is a very difficult problem. Taking the year as a whole, the results were not altogether unsatisfactory. The average monthly enrolment of the day and night schools together was 25, and the average daily attendance for the year was 17. Nevertheless, it is evident that the Aberdeen school has not yet overcome its difficulties; and its future history is altogether uncertain.

8. The *Grant-in-Aid Scheme* has now had a three years' trial, and the result is upon the whole satisfactory. With one exception, both managers and masters have expressed their satisfaction with the scheme itself and with the working of it. St. Paul's College School, St. Stephen's Church School at Sai Ying-p'ün, and the Victoria Girls' School were added to the list during the last year. St. Saviour's Day School was withdrawn. This makes the present number of those schools eleven, and there are fresh applications for the current year.

9. Experience has shown the necessity of one or two modifications of the original scheme. It is now evident that the values of the passes should be raised, and a proposal to that effect will soon be offered for approval. It will also be proposed to pay for attendance. Regularity is in itself a very valuable *result*, calling for much attention from all connected with a school, and being only attainable after considerable exertion. A payment, therefore, of so much per head on the average attendance will be included among the recommendations that are to be made. This, it is to be hoped, will satisfy the conductors of St. Saviour's Day School, now St. Joseph's English School, and induce them to reconsider their decision of declining to receive aid on the present conditions. On another point which presents an obstacle there may be some difficulty. It is objected to the present scheme that 200 daily attendances of 4 hours each in a year, is an excessive requirement, and that so much is not required elsewhere. It will of course rest with the Executive to say how far, if at all, it is desirable to make a retrogression in this direction, but a recommendation to that effect is not likely to be made. In agricultural and other districts where the services of the children are indispensable at certain seasons, it is only proper that due allowance should be made; but here, in the city of Victoria, there is nothing but sickness which can possibly interfere with a scholar's attendance. At present 113 days, exclusive of Sundays, are allowed for holidays and other causes of absence; and if that margin is not ample enough for all contingencies, it is difficult to see how we can stop short of allowing work to yield to play. On no other ground will any objection be offered, but firmness on this point seems to mean the difference between efficiency and inefficiency; between a school where education is considered a difficulty to be strenuously grappled with, and a school where only a certain routine of duty is considered sufficient.

10. A slight change was made last year in two of the standards for schools in Class I, that is, schools in which a Chinese education is given. These standards were too low, as was evident from the numbers that were presented for examination under them. The managers were satisfied with the change, but the masters, at first, did not accept of it without some demur. They ultimately admitted, on being pressed, that the change was all in favour of efficiency.

11. There is one subject which demands the strictest attention of managers. There is a tendency on the part of some of the masters to push on their scholars too quickly to the higher standards, probably, (shall it be said?), for the greater pecuniary advantage which they offer. This was seen very conspicuously at St. Stephen's Church School and the London Mission School in T'ai-p'ing Shan, and very disastrously at the London Mission School in Wán-tsai. Managers will find it necessary for the character of their schools to give their personal attention to this matter, and not allow the examination schedule to be forwarded until they have satisfied themselves that the scholars are entered in standards suited to their attainments and to their stay at school. It will no doubt happen that a clever boy can, with advantage to himself and to the school, be allowed to skip a standard occasionally; but, if this were the rule and not the exception, it would follow that the present standards are too low. That they are not so is admitted, and that being the case, the patient passing from standard to standard in successive years will be found to be the safest for the school and the wisest for the scholar. This is a subject which cannot be too earnestly commended to the consideration of managers. It was only last year that the tendency was observed, and it is probably due, in some measure, to the introduction of the changes already referred to.

12. To another matter also the personal attention of all managers is requested. Greater accuracy is necessary in making up the annual returns. In England, grants are not paid until these have been examined and passed; and, although there is no desire to hold out a threat, it may be advisable to adopt the same plan here. Chinese teachers especially have no notion of accuracy, probably because they cannot appreciate the value of statistics, which, it is needless to say, are worse than useless when not strictly correct. Managers will find it absolutely necessary to check every entry made by the teachers, if trouble to themselves and delay elsewhere are to be avoided in future.

13. Coming more particularly to the results of the examination, the question of attendance having already been discussed, 390 scholars were presented and 300 passed; in other words, the passes amounted to 77 per cent. This is lower than the average reached in England, but not lower perhaps than our special circumstances will account for. Speaking of the Birmingham Board Schools in November last, the Chairman is reported to have said: "As to educational results, the average number of passes is now 86 per cent., and for the past three years 84 per cent., while the average for the whole country has been a fraction less than 80 per cent." As only three of our schools are below that mark, there are good grounds for hope that we shall not be long behind our contemporaries.

14. Arranged in accordance with the number of scholars who passed in the standards, the schools stand in the following order. The percentages for 1875 are also given, for the sake of comparison.

	1876.	1875.
1. Baxter School, Sai Ying-p'ún,.....	90 per cent.	83 per cent.
2. St. Stephen's Church School, Sai Ying-p'ún,.....	88 " "	" "
3. Victoria Girls' School,	86 " "	" "
4. Baxter School, Staunton Street,	86 " "	77 " "
5. Baxter School, T'ai-p'ing Shán,	86 " "	86 " "
6. St. Paul's College School,	83 " "	" "
7. Victoria Boys' School,	81 " "	62 " "
8. St. Stephen's Church School, T'ai-p'ing Shán,.....	80 " "	92 " "
9. Basel Mission Girls' School,	72 " "	82 " "
10. London Mission School, T'ai-p'ing Shán,	63 " "	62 " "
11. London Mission School, Wán-tsai,	59 " "	88 " "

It is always necessary to repeat that this does not afford a just basis of comparison between the schools, on account of the different classes to which they belong; but, taking it in conjunction with the passes in the several subjects taught in the schools, as given in Table XIII, it will not be difficult to arrive at a fair conclusion as to the comparative merits of the schools. Managers will do well to give that Table a careful perusal, as by it they can best ascertain wherein their strength or their weakness lies.

15. In explanation of these two kinds of passes, it may be stated that a scholar may pass in reading but fail in writing or arithmetic, or in both. He will therefore not pass in the standard, but his pass in reading will count in estimating the general efficiency of the school. In England, all passes are paid for, but here, as in some other places, scholars are treated individually, and they have to pass fairly in all the subjects of a standard before the school gets the benefit of the result. This, of course, is a more laborious work for the examiner, but while the schools are limited in number as at present the additional labour may be disregarded; for the plan adopted is a better test of how far each scholar has benefited by the instruction given to him, and of his individual fitness for promotion to a higher standard. The higher values assigned to passes here make up for any loss arising from failures in individual subjects. In England, the rate is four shillings for a pass in reading, the same for one in writing, and the same for one in arithmetic, in all the standards. Here, the sums allowed for passes in the standards rise in a graduated scale from two dollars in the first to as much as eight, nine, and ten dollars in the sixth, according to the class in which the school is ranked. The greater expense attending education here is an additional reason for the higher rate of payment.

16. In addition to these general remarks, it will be proper to say something of the individual merits of these schools. For this purpose they will be taken in groups, in the order suggested by the preceding arrangement.

17. The Baxter Schools for Chinese Girls are advancing steadily both in numbers and in efficiency. The Staunton Street school was rather weak in geography, and the T'ai-p'ing Shán school in the explanation of the passages selected for reading; but, with these exceptions, the schools stand very high in all the subjects taught in them. The T'ai-p'ing Shán school was removed early in the year from very inconvenient premises to the Baxter Memorial School, which is all that could be desired as a class-room. The other schools are in fairly suitable buildings.

18. The St. Stephen's Church Schools are two in number. The new school situated in Sai Ying-p'ún, promises well. The scholars were wisely confined to the three lower standards, thus ensuring efficiency for the present and a solid foundation for the future. Reading was comparatively the weakest subject, but in other respects the school stood well. There were only four failures. The T'ai-p'ing Shán school, for the reason already given, did not stand so high as in the previous year. The fall of 12 per cent. in the number of passes was due to too great an anxiety on the part of the master to push on his scholars too rapidly, and also to his undervaluing the effect of the slight raising of the standards. This will be remedied in future, as both manager and master are alive to the mistake that was made. Barring this, there was abundant evidence of much hard work during the year. In several subjects the school stood much higher than any other in its own class. In composition alone could it be said to be really deficient.

19. The Victoria Schools are also two in number. The Boys' School stands 19 per cent higher than it did in 1875. Writing (from dictation) and arithmetic were rather weak, but in other subjects, geography especially, the proficiency was very great. The discipline of the school is hardly strict enough, but this reference to it will doubtless bring about the necessary change. It may be remarked in passing that in the majority of these schools this subject needs greater attention; for it includes not merely order and regularity, but habits of strict honesty when under examination. The necessity for keeping a close watch on the scholars while doing their written work imposes on the examiner a disagreeable duty from which he could be considerably relieved, if greater strictness were exercised throughout the year. It should not be forgotten that an adverse report on this point reduces the grant to a school by 5 per cent.

The Girls' School is in a highly satisfactory condition. Although only in its first year, scholars were presented in all the standards except the sixth, and all were fit for the standards in which they were placed. Every subject was thoroughly taught, as the high percentage of passes will prove. The discipline of the school and the intelligence of the scholars were especially noted as worthy of commendation. These two schools are strictly undenominational. They are attended principally by Portuguese, but are open to scholars of every class and of every creed.

20. St. Paul's College School is the third of the new schools which came under the scheme during the year. It was attended by 102 scholars, and the average daily attendance was 65. The teaching power is strong, there being a European master and two Chinese assistants for the three classes into which the scholars are divided. The class-rooms are spacious and well ventilated. The school materials are good and sufficient. The discipline is good. Great proficiency was shown in all the subjects that were undertaken. Several of the boys could have been placed in higher standards; but as the school was in its first year, and consequently feeling its way, it was wisely decided to limit the standards to the first three. Writing (from dictation) was the weakest subject, but all the others were very strong. If nothing unforeseen occurs, there is a successful future in store for this school.

21. In the Basel Mission Girls' School there was a falling off amounting to 10 per cent. This was due to the greater number of presentations in the two highest standards. It was in these alone that any weakness was shown. The others were well up to the previous mark. There was a remarkable falling off in History, owing to the manager's having had to place the class entirely in the hands of the Chinese teacher, who will have to exert himself considerably before the lost ground has been recovered; but the school is in good hands, and defects have only to be pointed out to receive the attention which they require.

22. The London Mission Schools were particularly unfortunate, and the cause was clearly ambition overleaping itself. The masters are energetic, intelligent men; but they allowed themselves to be allured, it is to be feared, by the pecuniary advantages which the higher standards offer. This was not so conspicuous at the T'ai-p'ing Shán school, which has risen one per cent., but as it had a long leeway to make up, on account of the former teacher's neglect, this is not so satisfactory as it would otherwise have been. The Wán-tsi school fell from 88 to 59 per cent. No scholars were entered in the first standard, and only three in the third. The rest were distributed among the second, fifth, and sixth; and of the 16 presented in the fifth standard no fewer than 12 failed. In addition to this error of judgment, the master made a mistake as to the amount of work he had to do, and in certain cases attempted to do just double what was required of him. The result could hardly have been otherwise than it proved. Perhaps the worst effect has been the resignation of the master, who lost heart and gave up his post. Although the examiner could not transgress the bounds prescribed to him, the manager would have been able to make allowance for failings which leaned to the side of duty. The same energy properly directed would, on another trial, have regained all that had been lost, and future success would have blunted the sting of last year's misfortune. At these two schools care will henceforth be taken that the manager is consulted about the classification of the scholars before the examinations take place.

23. The School Book Committee's books, which were at first neglected and not a little despised, are now read in all the schools in the Colony over which there is Government supervision. Chinese masters, like a great many grown up people, object to taking up a new study. What they were taught at school is good enough for those whom they have to teach. The subject-matter, though very familiar to Europeans, was, it must be remembered, entirely new to the masters, who, if left to themselves, would not have taken the trouble to familiarize themselves with the contents of the books; but steady pressure from all who were in charge of the schools brought about a change of attitude. When the masters understood that they had to teach them, the necessary exertion was soon forthcoming, and the books are now read side by side with the Chinese Classics and no objection offered. Three of the books have now reached the second edition, and the series promises to have more success than could ever have been anticipated for it.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

FREDERICK STEWART,
Inspector of Schools.

The Honourable J. GARDINER AUSTIN, C.M.G.,
Colonial Secretary,
HONGKONG.