

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 121.

The following Report on Queen's College, by the Examiners appointed by the Governing Body for 1897, is published.

By Command,

J. H. STEWART LOCKHART,
Colonial Secretary.

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HONGKONG, 11th January, 1898.

GENTLEMEN,—We have the honour of laying before you the following report of the Annual Examination which we have, by your request, lately conducted.

A schedule of work was given us and we carefully prepared papers so as at the same time to test the general efficiency of the School and to be able to arrange the boys of each class in order of merit. Some of the questions set were consequently rather difficult for the more backward boys in some classes, but none were really beyond their standard as indicated by the schedule.

We think, on reviewing the whole of our work, that we may have been a little severe in withholding marks from the lower boys in each class, and we are not prepared to say that the number of boys obtaining less than half marks represents truly the number of those who should be written down as failures. Such remarks as we shall make should be read in connection with the results as shown by the mark sheets.

We consider, (in view of the fact that a large number of boys have been in the School less than six months), that the result of the Examination shows that there has been steady and useful work going on, and that, in spite of conspicuous failures in some classes, the education given is satisfactory. It should be borne in mind that in a School of nearly 900 boys it is difficult to impart a uniformity of knowledge in the various subjects, and that under the most favourable conditions there is likely to be a large number of stupid or idle boys whose work will tend to lower the standard of the class in which they are examined. We make this suggestion to, in some way, mitigate what may be considered the severity of some of our critical remarks.

The task of reporting upon the work done is as difficult as the work itself is lengthy. If 900 boys do exercises in Dictation, Translation, Arithmetic or Reading, it is manifestly impossible to summarise the whole of the work in one subject in a simple sentence or a short one. We have therefore, in some cases, given a more detailed opinion.

The first and last feature which presented itself to us in this examination was, we think, a very important one, and we wish to call attention to it. We refer to the great unevenness of merit in almost every class in almost every subject. No examiner looks for equality throughout a class, but we certainly expected to find more uniformity in each of the eight classes, and especially in each A section. We have been surprised again and again by the disparity between a few boys near the top and a considerable number near the bottom of the same class. We understand that the cause of this is the very rapid promotion which has been made during the past year. We are aware that there has been a very large addition of new boys, but this ought not to produce the result just alluded to. If boys are thus artificially promoted and forced up the School by a large influx at the bottom, one of two results must follow, either the boys thus too rapidly promoted will continually fail, or the standard of the class in which they are thus placed will be lowered. If either of these results obtains, and if the boys are examined on a few months' work only, an *annual* examination becomes a mere farce and waste of time. We venture to suggest that a remedy may be found in the creation of more parallel divisions so that promotions may be made according to absolute, rather than merely relative, merit. If there be a class of 150 boys of a certain standard and 50 new boys arrive able to be placed in the same class it is manifestly unwise to promote 50 out of this class to make room for the new-comers. Possibly also it might be arranged that new boys should not be examined until they have been in the School a certain time unless they show special ability. It would, of course, be necessary to see that at no part of the School where any idle or stupid boys being neglected for the sake of the more industrious or clever ones. Though it would be desirable to keep each class full, the first object should be to preserve the standard of it, rather than the number of boys attending it. The work of examination would be easier, and more reliable, and one year's work might be more accurately compared with that of another.

We have had in mind the efforts that have been made to promote the study of English, and we are glad to be able to state that we have observed some marks of progress in this respect. Some of the Composition and Grammar papers, and the Reading and Conversation, lead us to think that there has been improvement, but there is much yet to be done.

Owing to the inevitable withdrawal of one of the three examiners on account of the pressing nature of his other public duties, the whole of the work devolved upon us. But, with the united approval of yourselves and the Head Master, in Reading and Conversation, we examined a few boys only in each section of the eight classes. The Head Master himself very kindly undertook to hear every boy read and converse before the rest of the examination began so that marks in these subjects

could be awarded. We are much indebted to him for this as our tables of marks would be very incomplete without reference to these two subjects. One of the assistant masters also furnished us with marks for shorthand in one class.

We now append our remarks on each subject.

Reading and Conversation.—The reading in the upper part of the School was satisfactory; and in the lower fair, but it is scarcely a test to give boys a passage to read which they have already read so often that it has become quite familiar. We notice a tendency to disregard punctuation, to omit or slur over small words of great importance to the sense, and to confuse singulars and plurals, and past and present tenses. It struck us that the chief faults in reading were due to carelessness. In conversation a few boys did well, many poorly. We hope that it will be found possible to increase the European Staff so that boys can learn to read and speak and write correctly. Much remains to be done before English colloquial can be said to hold its proper place as a subject of instruction in Queen's College.

Writing.—Marks for writing were awarded on the dictation exercises. This writing was eminently satisfactory, showing that almost every boy could write a good hand. Had the general work in other papers been marked for writing, there would have been less satisfaction. Boys often spoilt their work by carelessness, especially in the geography, grammar, and arithmetic papers; and it should be impressed upon them that in examination work there should be more uniformity of neatness. Inaccuracy of work and consequent loss of marks frequently resulted from untidiness.

Dictation.—In the upper school, with the exception of IIc (Junior), the dictation was satisfactory. The other classes call for more particular remarks. After listening to Chinese masters giving dictation we were not surprised to find a number of words wrongly spelt; for example, in class Vb, c, it was very common to see *builts* for *builds*, *white* for *wide*, *consist* for *consists*, *family* for *firmly*, *this* for *these*, *which* for *each*, and *each* for *its*. We are convinced that such mistakes as *misserssion*, *cristinous*, *dissmisteres*, *mistrict*, *esmeil*, which occurred in one class as spellings of one word would not have been made if the class had been dictated to by an English voice. In the majority of papers the spelling was fairly correct, but the mistakes, such as *escaped* for *escape*, *begin* for *begins*, and others equally careless, or showing an equal ignorance of syntax, were far too frequent. In VIa,b,c, the punctuation was feeble; some boys showed intelligence, placing the commas correctly; but as a general rule they were omitted or put in promiscuously. In another class we heard the dictation given and were quite prepared to find *it* written for *eat*, and *eat* for *it*, *rope* and *rogue* confused, and *t eth* spelt *teef*. We give these instances, in no hypercritical spirit, but because we think them very important. The divisions of class VIII use two different reading books which appear to us to be of unequal standard. The work in VIIIc was absurdly easy and very well done. Boys should be taught simple punctuation, not to divide monosyllables, and how to divide polysyllables.

Arithmetic.—Class Ia,b, is very small, only 7 boys. Five of them did satisfactory work on a fairly difficult paper. In Ic, two boys, taking the same paper, did better than any boy in Ia, and the rest did well. Several papers in IIa were good, but the work was very uneven: although easy questions were for the most part well done, there were many failures in the harder work. Class III does not compare favourably with the two higher classes. They showed weakness in fractions. Out of 47 boys in IIIa 28 did an example in vulgar fractions in the same way wrongly, and 29 could not do division of decimals correctly. Ic (Junior), who were examined with III, found the paper too difficult. The work of IV and IIc (Senior) was for the most part untidy, and mistakes were made in consequence of carelessness in writing. In the upper division of V vulgar fractions were fairly well done, but mistakes occurred by boys multiplying when they were asked to divide. In this class and IIc (Junior), who take the same work but do not seem to be up to the same standard, there was here and there a good paper; but on the whole the work was weak. Class VI was also disappointing, Class VII scarcely satisfactory, but the work of Class VIII was neat and promising.

Translation: English to Chinese.—Results in this subject show an improvement upon those of two years ago. The work of IIa, in which class all passed, deserves special mention. Throughout the School the work was well done. We noticed, however, in the lower school, that many boys mistook the meaning of simple English words; and in the upper School, especially in Ia, there was a tendency to go beyond mere translation by introducing phrases and even entire sentences which had little or nothing to do with the subject. This latter fault should be carefully guarded against. Chinese who are able to translate correctly often fail to do so because of a disposition to sacrifice accuracy to style. We would suggest that correct translation should be insisted upon as the only means of rendering this part of the work efficient.

Translation: Chinese to English.—With a few exceptions in the upper School, there was no attempt at independent translation; the renderings being almost word for word those found in the printed translations. It is not possible to attach much value to the reproduction in examinations of translations learnt by heart; and we are of opinion that the only real test would be made by setting each class a sentence or two of "sight" translation, which should be simpler than the prepared exercises.

Grammar.—The Grammar of the upper school, with the exception of the three non-Chinese classes, was excellent. There was strong evidence of very careful teaching; and we were pleased to find that boys could compose short sentences correctly to illustrate particular points. The

analysis of sentences was good. In the other classes the work was weak. Many papers were full of absurd errors arising apparently from attempts to remember statements in the text books which had nothing to do with the questions. In Vc, we noticed a curious instance of the mistake already referred to as common in reading, viz., the pronunciation of *eat* and similar sounds—*it* and *its* being given as parts of the verb *to eat*. A few papers in VA, B were satisfactory, but boys evidently expected certain questions and wrote matter which they were not asked for. In VI half the boys did fairly, but those at the bottom of the class were very weak indeed. The work of VII is very elementary. Parsing in the lower school was poor.

Geography.—Class I took a paper on Physical Geography as well as on the geography of Europe. A few boys did excellently showing that the subject had been well taught, but as a whole the work was spoilt by some very weak papers. There was a common confusion between trade winds and monsoons: the variation in the length of the day at a given place was too often ascribed to the distance of the earth from the sun which was frequently said to be greater in winter than in summer. The practice of guessing, which is not confined to one class, should be strongly discouraged. Class II had studied the geography of England; about a quarter of the boys did well, the rest did not seem to understand the subject. It appeared as if the few at the top had been taught at the expense of the rest of the class. It is necessary to teach boys to answer the questions set, and not to write down random answers, or lists of names not required. There were far too many stupid answers (as “From London to Calais by railway we pass Leeds,” “Severn flows N.E. to Humber” and “The coalfields are Cylon, Russia, South and West Indies”). The maps drawn from memory were good. About half the boys in Class III did satisfactory work; the B section being considerably better than the A. The subject had evidently been carefully taught, but the map-drawing was rather disappointing. The habit of guessing was again evident. One boy, after writing “Crimea is a town in Germany,” wrote “Crimea is a town in Denmark.” There were again many ridiculously wrong answers. Class IV offered the geography of China. A fair number of these papers were satisfactorily done, but there were an appalling number of mistakes arising from guessing or ignorance of English. There is too much learning by rote. Many boys do not understand what they write. There were frequent confusions between imports and exports, between imports and seaports, between imports and importance. We think it is right that boys should be taught the geography of their own country; and we would suggest that the geography of China be the subject of lessons in at least two classes. In drawing maps boys should be taught to mark the positions of towns as well as to insert the names, and, in doing so, not to put the position in the sea. They should also be taught to enter in their maps only such names as they are asked to enter. If the text book on China in use now in the School is to be continued, we hope that it may be revised. There does not appear to be consistency in the romanising of Chinese names: for instance, we notice Chungkeng, Chungking, Choongking for the same city; So-ngan and Si-ngan; Kew-kiang and Kiu-kiang; Shan-tung and Shang-tung; Quang-sai and Quang-si; Anam and Annam, &c.; and the provinces of Kiang-si and Kiang-su confused. Class V: Many boys gave definitions well, but failed largely in giving examples in Europe and Asia, which continents they were supposed to have studied. The work of the lower part of the class was very poor: the definitions were much confused, showing that boys had not understood what they had been taught. It seems a pity that the maps to be drawn from memory, which were fairly well done, should not be maps of at least part of the countries learnt from the text book. Had the subject been Africa (the same as the map), we think many boys would have done much better. Class VI: The fact that two or three boys got fair marks, and one (in A) good marks, points to a failure in the rest of the class which should have been avoided. Boys, who are taught “definitions,” should be able to give fair examples of them. Scarcely any boys could give the capitals of England, China, and India. The maps of Hongkong drawn from memory were for the most part good.

Composition.—In Class I and in two divisions of Class V there was a high percentage of passes. In the other classes the percentage varied from 50 to 70, except in Class IIc (Junior) which was miserably weak. The highest class wrote on the question, “What are the best means of developing the resources of China.” Five good essays were sent in from each section of the class. There was little evidence of original personal effort, but several boys showed an appreciation of China’s condition, and an acquaintance with schemes of reform which have from time to time been suggested in newspapers. In the best papers the examiners are able to commend the order of treatment and general style. To the other classes short stories were read, and the boys were required to reproduce them in their own language immediately afterwards. Class II did fairly well; but as regards the style of composition in the lower classes, we can only say that many boys wrote in a language so peculiarly their own as to be quite unintelligible to the examiners. We would here repeat the opinion which has been already expressed that until colloquial English is more thoroughly learned by Chinese boys in the lower classes, their written English will never be satisfactory.

History.—A special period of 150 years only was offered by Class I; Classes II and III offered outlines of longer periods. The work of IA, Ic (Senior) and IIA was good, and that of IIIB excellent. In Ic (Junior), IIc and IIIA answers were generally feeble and meagre. Two boys in Ic distinguished themselves, C. H. LEE gaining full marks and C. B. HAYWARD, 96. Although no gene-

ral history was offered by Class I, the examiners deemed it advisable to ask a few easy questions outside the special period scheduled. Results showed, in many cases, so slight an acquaintance with facts of primary importance outside the period, that we question whether all the time devoted to this subject is wisely spent in teaching comparatively unimportant details within the period. Whilst we think special studies in history should be encouraged, we are strongly convinced that broad general outlines should be clear in the mind before special attention is given to brief epochs in the early centuries of English History. We suggest, therefore, that boys in the highest class be required to prepare for their year's work both special and general history.

Algebra:—There is evidence of careful teaching in this subject. Two boys in IA did excellently. While in Ic (Senior) fully three-quarters of the boys passed satisfactorily. In IIA a fair proportion of the boys gained good marks, but there were many weak papers. In IIIA there was some satisfactory work, but only three attempts were made at factors which are evidently not taught; there were also many mistakes in simple rules. IIIB is, in this subject as in so many others, in strong contrast to IIIA. They took the same paper and showed that they had been taught to work accurately. Ic (Junior) ought to have done better. IIc (Senior) have evidently not been taught factors, and the common mistakes in simple rules were very frequent. At present it would be better not to teach this class Algebra, but to let them improve their arithmetic.

Euclid:—In IA there were two excellent papers, and two very poor indeed. The upper part of IIA and a few boys scattered up and down did very well indeed, in the small amount that they offered (Book I. 1-26). The rest did badly, making terrible confusion between the uses of *and*, *therefore*, *for* and *because* in an argument; they failed to apply I. 4 properly. In Ic (Junior), taking a shorter paper (propos. 1-15), only two boys wrote proposition 2 and only one proposition 12 correctly. No other propositions were written out well. The papers were full of bad mistakes. In IIIA only 15 boys out of 47 passed, but most of these did creditably (on propositions 1-12). The faults arising from attempts at learning by heart are evident in the omission of important steps in an argument, and in the impossible order in which sentences are arranged. The majority of these boys do not understand what they try to write and the suggestion was forced upon the examiners again and again that the time of the class might be spent more profitably. In Euclid, if symbols are allowed for abbreviation care should be taken that they are thoroughly understood. In IIIB there was again evidence of much better teaching: Many propositions were correctly written out. On November 20th, within a month of the examination, the Head Master reported to us that one division of Class II could not offer Euclid as "they know nothing." As they had offered the first 15 propositions and this is supposed to be a year's work, the remark which was made in the Report of 1895, that "at present the time spent upon it (Euclid) is, in the majority of cases, wasted," is, in this particular case, partially confirmed.

General Information and Intelligence:—This paper afforded a test of power of expression rather than of information in possession of the boys. Although there were some intelligent papers, the results showed a weakness amongst boys other than English in expressing themselves.

Shorthand:—We consulted an expert in regard to the special test in shorthand; he writes to us as follows:—"The writer should not have tackled dictation with his present knowledge of contractions and grammalogues; and if an examiner were inclined to be severe he would deduct marks for faulty outlines. Between each line of shorthand there should be a clear line of space; then outline does not run into outline. As a general rule there should be no *speed* dictation until the pupil has reached the 'reporting style'."

Shakespeare:—Class I prepared the first two Acts of "The Merchant of Venice." The upper boys in both divisions of the class did remarkably good papers: the rest were very weak. This short portion of a play appears to be the work of one term only. We suggest that the work of a longer period should be presented for the annual examination.

French:—One boy did excellently. Several boys in Ic did very satisfactorily on an easier paper. IIc (Senior) was very weak, but they had apparently only just begun the subject.

Book-keeping:—Of the seven papers from IA four were correctly, though not very neatly, done. In IIA half the boys passed, though only two obtained high marks.

Latin:—One boy offered Latin and did a good paper on elementary grammar and Caesar I. 1-30. Both papers were marked by accuracy and style.

Pupil Teachers:—We examined three Pupil Teachers in ten subjects along with Class I, but their work did not compare favourably with that of the boys. All failed in Dictation and Geography, only one passed in History and in Arithmetic, but in Grammar and Composition they did fairly.

We recommend the following boys for Scholarships:—

Morrison Senior:	C. H. LEE.
Morrison Junior:	HUNG HING KAM.
Stewart:	LO PUN FAI.
Belilios Senior:	C. H. LEE and C. B. HAYWARD.
Belilios Junior:	WONG TAK KWONG.

And prizes for special subjects according to the mark sheets.

