

What then are the facts at present before me? They are, in brief, the numerical results obtained from five distinct examinations of the same school in five successive years. The examiner is the same person throughout, and is, therefore, more or less a constant factor; the personnel of the school—teachers as well as taught—naturally varies from year to year. It would obviously be a breach of confidence to name either the school or the examiner; but the general character of the school itself must be indicated. It was a girl's school with pupils varying from thirty to forty in number and from ten to sixteen or seventeen years of age. The staff consisted mainly of trained secondary teachers, and the school seemed to be efficiently conducted. At any rate, no girls ever failed to reach the normal pass standard of one-third of full marks, except those who had been at the school for a very short period or who had been irregular in attendance. These explanations, I ought to add, were obtained by putting together a schedule of attendance and the mark-lists, and were not in any way prompted by the headmistress.

So much for the character of the school; now for the data and the method by which the appended results were obtained. During the five years under review there were altogether 167 girls examined, about 250 papers were set, and about 1,500 scripts were marked. Each annual examination was quite independent of the preceding ones; it was not until the five years were over that the chance discovery of the records suggested the idea of attempting

to extract some lessons from putting the results together in a kind of quinquennial report. Those parts of this report which were designed to illustrate the general progress of the school as a whole do not concern us in this place; we need summarize only those parts which bear on the relative difficulty of the subjects offered.

The survey was based on a laborious analysis of the mark-lists of the several years. This method was, I think, calculated to eliminate various inequalities which are inevitable in any single examination: for instance the average intelligence of the members of the school probably varied from year to year; not all of the papers set—two hundred and fifty in all—can have been equally adapted to the class for which they were intended. But when the several results—each independently arrived at—are put together the general results should be almost absolutely trustworthy.

The relative difficulty of the subjects handled may be deduced in several different ways from the analysis of the mark-lists. First, there is the obvious method of ranging the subjects in the descending order of the percentages gained in each throughout the school. Another method consists in the investigation of the number of unsuccessful scripts per subject and the proportion which these bear to the total number of scripts submitted in each subject. And, finally, there is the method of tabulating the subjects according to the number of papers set in them which proved beyond the average capacity of the class for whom they were designed—that is, where the average marks