

making any acquaintance with such studies as algebra, Euclid, book-keeping, or shorthand. In the third place, some of our most experienced teachers delight in having their best pupils at school for a year or so after they have passed their standards. The teachers say that during the period indicated they can, in addition to supplementing and consolidating the standard work, influence to a greater extent than was previously possible their pupils' character.

The numbers presented in Standards V. and VI. touch the highest point yet reached by these classes.

Since the beginning of the present decade the mean of average age has fallen by about a month annually. This implies that in each successive year pupils are being more rapidly pushed through their respective standards. The circumstance may, no doubt, be partly explained by a gradual increase in the efficiency of the teaching-power during the ten years. To this diminution of the age at which pupils pass their standards there will, of course, be a limit by-and-by. Meanwhile, we do not regard it as altogether an unmixed good. It may, perhaps, be a crude generalisation, but we believe it corresponds pretty closely with experience to say that a pupil's capacity to assimilate knowledge and turn it to profitable account increases in a twofold ratio each successive year. How precious, then, every additional year that a child can spend at school!

*The Health and Physique of the Pupils.*—A visitor dropping unexpectedly into any of our schools would, without hesitation, pronounce the children clean, well clad, well fed, and robust. If he were to visit all our schools in succession his eyes might perchance alight at long intervals on a child in whose face he could read signs of neglect or overwork. Such a child is happily so rare an exception that it might almost be said that, so far as appearances go, our children come from model homes. Nor do the conditions of the school impair the beneficent influences of the home. If certain lessons—drawing, slate-work, and writing, for example—imply a posture not exactly natural, these lessons never come consecutively, but are relieved by oral lessons, physical exercises, or singing, during which the pupil's position is free and unconstrained. If the air at times tends to become surcharged with carbonic acid, there are mid-forenoon, mid-day, and mid-afternoon recesses, during which a current of fresh air is sent through the room, and all feelings of constraint and restraint are lost in the gambols of the playground. To improve the carriage of the pupils, military drill is taught more or less efficiently in all the larger schools. In the matter of health and physique several forward steps yet remain to be taken. (1.) Our suggestion that all the pupils in the upper classes of the town schools should muster periodically for collective drill, though favourably received by the Board, and subsequently, we believe, by the Defence Department, has not yet been carried into practice. (2.) We have now in our town public swimming-baths. Surely it would be possible to make arrangements whereby those members of the two highest classes that cannot swim could receive a course of lessons in the art of swimming. (3.) We cannot regard our school course as entirely satisfactory so long as the pupils leave without receiving adequate instruction in first aid—until, in a word, such instruction is made an integral part of the syllabus.

*The Teachers and the Teaching.*—The teachers of the district comprise a body of men and women entirely devoted to their work. The influence of many of them is not bounded by the four walls of the schoolroom, but extends throughout their entire district. Many are students, to the great advantage of the schools in which they labour. It would be a great gain to education in Southland if more of the teachers were to take to field-work—to the study of the botany, the zoology, or the geology of their respective localities. The indirect effects of such studies on themselves and on their pupils would be immensely beneficial—beneficial to themselves, because, in their pursuit of the branch selected, their minds would be recalled from the harassing cares and petty annoyances of the class-room; and to their pupils, because, by the teacher's example, they would be led to observe, question, and record the ways of nature. The teachers would, further, have the satisfaction of knowing that they were rendering a real service to the cause of science and to their country. In their active teaching, the teachers, for the most part, take an enlightened and comprehensive view of their work. One of the chief dangers of our modern education—a danger that teachers should constantly guard against—is the splitting-up of the whole subject, and the viewing of each part as if it were the whole. The subject of English, for example, is divided and subdivided into a number of parts, each of which has to be separately appraised by an examiner. The division of pupils into standards, again, tends to make teachers regard each standard as a separate entity. Such a way of looking at education is not merely fallacious—it is pernicious. Teachers should know and feel that when they are handling the parts they are at the same time modifying and moulding the whole. Hence the need for the teacher of a single class in large schools being in touch with the teachers of the classes immediately above and below. The connecting links, in the case of large schools, are, of course, the headmaster and the weekly conference of teachers. There is one habit that still lies like a dead-weight on some of our teachers—the habit, we mean, of blinding themselves to their subject and to the needs of their pupils through the obstruction of a sixpenny text-book. Were they to discard entirely the geography, history, or science text-book while lessons are proceeding something might, perhaps, be lost in mechanical accuracy, but much would be gained in life, completeness, and variety.

*School Buildings and Grounds.*—We nearly always find the interior of the school buildings clean and tidy, and the furniture and apparatus carefully conserved. Much is quietly being done in the way of embellishing the windows with flowers and the walls with pictures. We cannot say that many school gardens have been laid off during the year, nor can we say that those already formed have in all cases received quite so much attention as they did in previous years. This is matter for regret, for the school garden, to mention two only of its advantages, may be made the means of teaching the cardinal virtues, and, in country schools—in most of which the principles of agriculture are taught—a means of illustration and a storehouse of specimens. Many of the gardens attached to the residences are splendidly kept; those of bachelors may be mentioned by way of exception and contrast. Referring to the grounds, we note that every year adds to some of