

are essential elements in the foundation of character. It is one of the risks to which the new system exposes us that this fact may to some extent be lost sight of.

Regarding the revised syllabus we may say, without committing ourselves to any decided opinion as to how it will work out in practice, that we are in entire sympathy with the general tenor of its provisions. The chief of the new provisions are these:—

(1.) The arrangement of pupils in classes and the promotion of pupils from class to class are entirely in the discretion of the head master.

(2.) The standard of exemption has been raised from Standard IV. to Standard V., and special provision is made for the examination of pupils desiring exemption certificates.

(3.) In Standard VI. alone will the examination of pupils for certificates of proficiency be entirely in the hands of the Inspector: this doubtless with a view to the production of independent testimony of ability by pupils applying for situations in a public or private capacity.

(4.) The standard subjects have been rearranged, the grouping now being—A. Pass-subjects: (1) English, comprising reading, spelling and dictation, writing and composition; and (2) arithmetic. B. Class-subjects: Geography, drawing, grammar, history, elementary science and object lessons, recitation and handwork. C. Additional subjects: Singing, needlework, and drill. This is the arrangement of subjects for all classes except Standard VI., in which geography and drawing are retained as pass-subjects. Mental arithmetic and comprehension will again be taken as an integral portion of arithmetic and reading respectively, a position from which we have always maintained they should never have been divorced.

(5.) As has been done hitherto, the Inspector at his annual visit will report on the condition of the school, with this fundamental difference: that the individual pass drops entirely out of sight. The annual report will record in general terms the Inspector's estimate of the quality of the work done in the pass- and class-subjects, the amount and quality of the work done in the additional subjects, and the efficiency of the instruction in the preparatory classes and the class above Standard VI. The Inspector will have further to report on the discretion shown by the teacher in his classification and promotion of pupils.

(6.) Distinct recognition is given by the syllabus to the class above Standard VI.

(7.) The conditions for the promotion of pupils to higher classes have been rendered less stringent than they have hitherto been. The only subject in which an absolute pass is uniformly insisted upon is reading, Standard VI. alone being an exception.

(8.) The Inspector may, if he deems it necessary, make an independent examination of the whole school.

(9.) The inspection report will take the same form as before, except in two respects: (1) The list of text-books in use will be reported on; as will also (2) the condition of the apparatus and appliances—a provision agreeing with a recommendation we made in our special report on the first issue of the revised syllabus.

The revised syllabus has been prepared with the view of bringing our school-work into agreement with existing social conditions and with the spirit of the times. What appear to be its most beneficent provisions to those actually engaged in the work of education are the following: To the pupil it brings relief in the form of less rigorous examination, and variety of occupation in the form of handwork. Many a child whose mind is irresponsible to ordinary instruction, whose store of nerve energy is scant at the centres of thought, but plentiful at the tips of his fingers, will now be solaced by an occasional hour's "learning by doing," during which his natural tastes may freely manifest themselves. Again, pupils who excel in any subject—arithmetic, for instance—need not keep marking time till their slower classmates come into line. The frequency of their promotion will be in proportion to their own diligence. Once more, supreme importance is attached to the subject of reading, the full import of which provision will not be adequately recognised till girlhood and boyhood merge into youth, and youth into womanhood and manhood.

The advantages of the revised syllabus to the teacher may be summed up in a single word, and that is the word "freedom." His individuality will now have a better chance of asserting itself in those directions whither his natural bent and abilities lead him. He will be able to study to a greater extent the tastes and temperament of individual pupils, promoting the brighter while not unduly hurrying the more backward. Acting more largely on his own initiative, and recognising the larger trust that has been reposed in him, he must perforce develop an increase of originality, penetration, and power in grappling with the problems of his profession.

The Inspector's work will be modified in several important directions. At his annual visit he will have less ground to cover, though no less work to do. His examination will be directed more to the discovery of the quality of the instruction imparted than of its amount. He will have more time to study the school not merely as a cunningly devised machine mechanically turning out a certain product, but as, under the control of the head master, a self-determining agency striving to launch pupils into life strong and sound in body, mind, and character.

It is said that Bismarck, on being asked after the battle of Sadowa who was the best general, instantly replied, "The schoolmaster." The story may be apocryphal, but its appositeness is shown by the growth of the German Empire. If New Zealand is to take her legitimate place among the nations of the earth it can only be by the schoolmaster doing his part well. It may gravely be questioned whether the estimation in which the teacher is held, and the sympathy extended to him, is at all proportionate to the importance of the mission he is called upon to fulfil. Beset on every hand by petty difficulties, sensible at every turn of patent failure, feeling that the attainment of his ideal recedes with the flux of time, he may at least take refuge in the just reflection that his part in shaping the nation's destiny is second to none.

Recalling ourselves for a moment to questions more directly practical and pressing, we venture to urge the Board to keep the following in view:—

(1.) There is a clamant need in our schools for more apparatus and appliances. Agricultural