

by the new regulations has been, on the whole, judiciously used. A balancing of conditions, and a constant watchfulness that promotions are made strictly according to the requirements, will be needed for some time to come; but under careful inspection there need be no fear that teachers will misuse their powers to the detriment of their pupils or to the lowering of education. Of course, there are weaknesses in the new plan of examination, particularly in the inequality of classification that must necessarily exist, as well in education districts as in school districts. Variations must be greater where there are a thousand examiners than where there are thirty; still, I am satisfied that the recent changes are in the right direction, for the increased trust reposed in teachers, if it does nothing else, will certainly result in the creation of a higher tone in the working of the schools, and this aspect of school training is worth striving for.

During the year I have watched the likely effect of the "free classification of pupils" upon the schools, and already there are signs that there will be special types of work in the different school districts. Men of strong individuality will impress their own particular tastes and characteristics upon the school, for the preparation of the children will partake of something more than a mere "get-up" for examination purposes. It has been so long the practice to estimate the condition of a school on the capacity shown by a teacher in the preparation of work set forth in the standard requirements that some time is wanted for the mind to grasp the freer conditions under which the work of a school may now be carried on. And many teachers need a reminder of this fact. They are not now free to complain of hide-bound conditions. The freedom allowed has not produced as yet any marked change in the mode of conducting the work of the schools, nor even in the methods of teaching. No doubt the teachers in a large measure are what syllabus and regulation have made them, and it can hardly be expected that new plans and methods will have so soon taken the place of the old drudgery ways that have done duty so long. But I look to the coming year with confidence, and my aim will be to afford every encouragement to the teachers to adapt themselves to the new conditions, and to so employ methods of training that nature will become easier to read and more pleasant to unfold than has been possible in the past.

Attention was called last year to the great need in the schools of dovetailing the teaching of a subject as children advance from the lower to the higher classes. The more this aspect of preparation is considered the more it becomes evident that the majority of children have a very varied experience, even in the preparation of subjects like arithmetic, writing, geography, and history. In some schools children are taught "tots" and can add with great rapidity; but when the same children are asked to work even a simple problem they cannot do it.

Still, there is a bright side in the educational work of the district, for, although defects are met with in school organization and in methods of instruction there are compensating qualities that go to prove how, even under an imperfect system, intelligent plans may be devised by teachers who aim at practical training. Ormond, as already pointed out, is distinguished for its flower-gardens. At Waerengaahika the children make hammocks, baskets, summer curtains, and a variety of other things, while grafting and budding are practically taught during the season to the senior boys and girls at Makuri School. At Kumeroa the children in the highest class keep each a diary for names of native flowers that open month by month, together with remarks on the changes that take place in the weather. Ormondville and Tolago Bay keep a daily "log" of the weather, including temperature, wind, kinds of clouds, and height of barometer; and other schools are moving in a similar direction. A rain-gauge, anemometer, and photometer might be encouraged for use in every country school, and a vast variety of valuable facts could be collected in this way. The problem of teaching cookery to the girls has been solved with commendable success by the mistress of the Waerengaahika School. One afternoon a week is set aside by the wife of the master of the school for instruction in practical cooking and household management. The girls meet at the teacher's residence, and they go through a course of training—scrubbing, polishing, baking, and cooking—such as will be of great value to them in the future. A similar plan of instruction has been commenced at Woodville, and if the new regulations of the Central Department are sufficiently elastic and practical to meet cases of this kind by special grants there will be little difficulty in teaching practical domestic economy to the girls of the district.

These are aspects of special training such as are to be found in the schools of the district, but there are yet other schools that are worthy of honourable mention for the admirable care bestowed on them by teachers. Gisborne, Patutahi, Maraetaha, Hastings, Napier Main, Napier Training, Waipawa, Woodville, Dannevirke (main), Makotuku, Taradale, and Port Ahuriri (main and side) excel in some aspect of school training and preparation; but most of the other schools are in very fair working order, and are merely kept back owing to the existence of conditions that make it difficult for the teachers to reach the standard of efficiency at which they certainly aim. In any case, one is assured that the large majority of teachers in the service of the Board have striven to do their work well during the past year.

It is doubtful whether the special grants that are offered under the new regulations in connection with the Manual and Technical Instruction Act of last year will prove of much advantage to the schools. Either the work that is being fostered by means of special grants is of more importance to the children and the country than the work that has hitherto been done, or it is not. If it is, then surely the old plans should be discontinued, the new ones adopted, and the grants that are offered might be well paid over to the Board for the purchase of the necessary apparatus and appliances. For years kindergarten has been industriously taught by a number of the younger and more ambitious lady teachers by means of appliances purchased out of their own hard-earned wage, and it is merely the want of appliances that has kept and is keeping this and cognate subjects from being generally taught in the schools throughout the district.

The question of holidays is one that must sooner or later receive the attention of the Board. The past year has perhaps been an unusual one, yet it must be evident that holidays are given too frequently, and quite a number of schools were opened last year less than four hundred times, or