

The following is a summary of results for the whole district :—

Classes.				Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those presented.
							Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	212	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	616	603	477	13 8
" V.	...	...	...	939	908	786	12 11
" IV.	...	...	...	1,202	1,170	1,031	11 11
" III.	...	...	...	1,300	1,259	1,111	10 10
" II.	...	...	...	1,217	1,184	1,093	9 8
" I.	...	...	...	1,043	1,024	966	8 8
Preparatory	...	...	...	2,903	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	...	9,432	6,148	5,464	11 3·6*

* Mean of average age.

Since the year 1895 head-teachers have examined their pupils for promotion in Standards I. and II. By the regulations of the year to which this report refers they were further charged with the examination of the pupils in Standards III., IV., and V. We found that the teachers as a whole performed this part of their functions in a thoroughly conscientious spirit, many of them being, if anything, more exacting than the Inspector would have been. In some few instances, however, the teachers, in promoting their pupils, showed that they lacked either sound judgment or backbone. In such cases the pupils were re-examined by the Inspector, whose classification was accordingly substituted for the teacher's. In whatever directions the syllabus may be modified, both teachers and Inspectors must rigorously set their faces against the evil of over-classification—an evil that leads to nothing but waste of energy and vexation of spirit. Referring further to the examinations of Standards III., IV., and V. by the teacher, we may observe that the percentage of passes in each class is higher for last examination than in either of the two previous examinations. This fact, we should imagine, is to be explained rather by the easier conditions on which a pass is now obtainable than by any relaxation of the standard on the part of the teachers.

We notice that relatively fewer pupils secured certificates in Standard VI. than in the years 1898 and 1899 respectively. This was perhaps to be expected. Feeling as we do that a certificate of proficiency should be the reward of effort and undoubted fitness on the pupil's part, and that the public has a right to look for capacity in the bearer of such certificate, we believe we were justified in demanding from pupils in this class a complete fulfilment of the requirements of the syllabus.

Though we make these remarks as to the manner in which the individual pass fared in the hands of the teacher and Inspector respectively, we shall not be sorry when this method of estimating the efficiency of a school has been finally consigned to oblivion. The method of individual examination, while compelling a certain amount of hard work and thoroughness, produces too much anxiety and too much stress to be recognised as a legitimate factor in the best forms of school work. This method has also served a useful purpose in bringing into clear relief the true educational standpoint; but, on the other hand, it has worked serious mischief in several directions. It has been the fertile source of hurry, cram, and superficiality—banes of genuine school work, each and all. It has set up a false standard in the minds of the people, many of whom have come to regard a standard pass as the hall-mark of educational proficiency. It has, moreover, produced a pernicious effect on the work of the teachers, inasmuch as it has continually set before their minds a false aim, greatly obscuring the true sphere of the teacher's labours, as well as the most desirable fruits of his labours. It is, of course, in the public interest that there should be something in the nature of a leaving examination, but if during a child's school course the teacher's methods are really educative, and his influence in other directions beneficial, this examination might very well be left to take care of itself.

The demand for reform in the method of examination has come chiefly from the teachers. Other reforms not less pressing are demanded by the circumstances of our colony and the economic conditions of our times. It is perfectly evident that we must within the next few years face a series of changes more or less radical in the subjects of instruction, and in the methods of teaching and inspection. It is therefore well that we should represent to ourselves some guiding principles as to the directions that the necessary reforms should take.

The position appears to us to be luminously stated in a recent address on the "Aims of Education" by Sir Henry Craik, Secretary of the Scotch Education Department. "The older methods," says Sir Henry, "were all very well in the earlier stages. They insured a modicum of thoroughness and efficient work, and provided against the neglect of individual pupils. They were capable of easy test. But they were admittedly only stepping-stones towards something better which should free the schools from tutelage, and should leave the schools more to local effort, to local initiative, and to local responsibility. This stage has been now reached. But do not let us mistake its aim and its meaning. It is not devised only to save trouble to the department or its Inspectors, or to make the task of the teachers easier. No greater mistake could be made than to interpret it in that light. The schools are there for the sake of the community and of the children, and whatever method is more certain in its efficiency and in its results for their benefit, that method