

low a basis, or on too imperfect a preparation in those of the class subjects that become pass subjects in the highest standard. As far as I am able to judge, no difference whatever has been made in the demands for a pass, and it can hardly be that work taken under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act will have affected the results in the higher classes as much as is shown in the table. Little sympathy can be shown with teachers whose only aim is to rush children through the standard course at a rate only possible at the cost of imperfect preparation. Free classification was intended to give greater thoroughness to the children by enabling teachers to place them under the most favourable working conditions, and it would be a good thing were this point kept clearly in view. Although the passes in Standard VI. show such a decided falling-off, the progress of education in its wider aspects has certainly made rapid and encouraging strides. The new influences that are working in the schools are certainly having a good effect. When teachers meet together, as the majority of them have been able to do at the Saturday classes, the result must be beneficial, and it is for this reason that I think the training grant for the carrying-on of special classes for teachers is one of the healthiest signs in our school progress that has been made for a number of years. Certainly the classes that have been carried on throughout the year at Gisborne, Napier, and Dannevirke have been much appreciated, and if the course can be continued in the way of anticipatory preparation for new work in the schools the benefit to the country will be very great. Among the influences suggested as affecting the schools just now may be mentioned the operation of the Manual and Technical Instruction Act of 1900; the improved status of the teachers by the introduction of the salaries scale; the assistance offered by the Government for the establishment of district high schools; and, finally, the prospect of a superannuation scheme.

The improved prospects that are held out to the better classed teachers will certainly be highly beneficial in the end, if proper care is taken that what is to be sought for by them is substance and not shadow. The best teachers are wanted in the primary schools. Because a man is a graduate it ought not to be assumed that his work is to teach something termed the "higher subjects." What are higher subjects and what lower? If subjects of instruction are estimated in proportion to their value to each individual in life, it must be that reading, writing, or English and the science of numbers occupy first place. But these vital subjects to every pupil who attends a public school do not receive as much careful attention as formerly, and too often the work of teaching them is relegated to the least competent on the school staff. The danger is a growing one, and it is fostered by the demands of parents, who think that Latin, and French, and Euclid are to be preferred to a knowledge of their own mother tongue. What we need in the schools is improved methods of instruction, and not a wider list of subjects. It can hardly be urged too often or too strongly that it is by means of improved methods of instruction that progress towards the higher studies will be possible in the case of children who are taught in the public schools. Thoroughness in the foundation work is necessary, for by means of reading and writing the world's thought is communicated. It seldom happens that one learns in the schools of a new method or plan being tried in the instruction of children, and the ruts of routine are so many by the way that teachers, falling into them, seldom get out again. The mere providing of facts for memory-preparation after the manner of getting special fattening food for young ducks and turkeys is neither teaching, training, nor education. Far too much of the early mental fattening process is going on, and too little of that generous and manly training that tends to bring out the real characteristics of children and produce, as a final product, a real live, observant, and intelligent citizen. Knowledge in itself gives power, and education should give the children the power to discover that mankind is progressive, and that the world of thought and of humanity is moving rapidly; and if we are to keep abreast in this hard world of progress and competition we must be diligent, observant, active, and apt, for aptitude, after all, is the power that makes adaptation in life possible.

The absence of originality in methods of instruction might easily be illustrated by reference to what is often seen going on in certain schools, but there is no necessity to do this here. An "Inspector's visit" provides a means of doing some practical good in a school, when a quiet talk with a teacher on school method and forms of instruction leads to practical issues in the case of teachers who are apt and open to improvement. It is at times a task of some difficulty to get teachers to leave the old methods of instruction and training. A higher plane, however, must be reached, for if we are to have an educated democracy the first essential is to deal with children as beings capable of being trusted when work has to be done and tested. The syllabus of instruction may perhaps operate in such a way as to lead teachers to pursue defective methods of instruction, and this may perhaps be urged in the case of an important subject like geography. In the earlier stages of teaching this subject there is little to call up the thinking and reflective faculties of children, and yet what valuable information is available were the subject taught with a view to its intelligent preparation and practical use! The annual publications that are issued by the Lands and Survey Department, the Marine Department with respect to lighthouses, &c., the Tourist Department, and the Government Year-book, with their beautiful maps, illustrations, and diagrams, should be brought under the notice of every pupil learning geography in the public schools. Information such as is found in the publications named becomes invaluable to children in after life, as they are made acquainted with sources of useful information about which the majority of adults in the country are entirely ignorant. Even teachers appear to have but slight acquaintance with what is the most valuable physical and political geography of the colony, and it would be a very good thing if every school had a bound copy of the publications named for the benefit of teachers and pupils. With the help of a "gazetteer," I make bold to say that a better knowledge of New Zealand, and of the world generally, would be obtained than is possible from the use of "the special standard preparations" that now flood the market and the schools in the shape of "text-books."

The regulations that were issued by the Minister, having reference to district high schools, have created a desire in quite a number of districts for the establishment of a higher-grade school