

the work of the school, especially the elementary school, are aghast at the influence they are exercising in hindering the development of practical ability." So Professor Dewar, president of the association, in an address on "Education and Progress": "Mental habits are formed for good or for evil long before men go to the technical schools. We have to begin at the beginning: we have to train the population from the first to think correctly and logically, to deal at first hand with facts, and to evolve, each one to evolve for himself, the solution of the problem put before him, instead of learning by rote the solution given by somebody else." And Professor Perry was so much impressed by the fatuity of much of the present-day methods that he invoked a conflagration or an earthquake to wreck the existing system of education, so that the whole business might be reconstructed on consistent and simple lines. The names of Perry, Armstrong, and Dewar are names to conjure with in education and science, so that we may take heart of grace when we reflect that we have committed ourselves to a policy in accordance with which our young people will be trained on the principles advocated in the educational section of the British Association.

We sincerely hope that the Board will adopt our suggestion regarding the institution of mid-summer classes for the benefit of teachers in remote parts of the district who have not hitherto had the opportunity of attending special classes. The further suggestion may be made here that, at the end of 1904, there should be held in Invercargill an exhibition of manual work, which might also include competitions in other departments of school-work, such as mental arithmetic, drill, singing, and recitation. Such an exhibition would do a great deal to stimulate educational activity amongst us.

*Holidays.*—We are often struck, upon the occasions of our annual visits to the schools, by the fewness of the actual number of working-days in the school year. Much is explained by the prevalence of sickness, by the temporary closing of the school for some other reason, or by the long-continued and oft-repeated bad weather. But when due allowance has been made for reasonable excuses, and for the regular holidays, the ratio of actual working-days to the possible number of working-days is often too small; and the smallness is often due to that bane of school work, the incidental holiday. Better for the children, better for the teacher, and better for the cause of progress would be a holiday or two granted regularly after the teacher's periodical examinations. The wretched incidental holiday, projected, as it often is, right into the middle of the week, destroys the continuity of school-work, unsettles the pupils, and tends to make them fertile in specious excuses for the shirking of duty.

*Sanitation.*—The instructions issued by the Board concerning intervals and the airing of class-rooms have been uniformly complied with. We almost invariably find the class-rooms and outside premises tidy and clean. We cannot say, however, that the water-tanks are always as clean as they should be, and we have heard of cases of serious illness being attributed to impure water drunk from the school tank. Every teacher should make the frequent inspection of the school tank an imperative duty, so that there may be no harbouring of impurities such as might cause sickness.

*Free Secondary Education.*—Viewed from our standpoint the regulations now in force regarding admission to the high school leave much to be desired. Pupils may now enter the high school accredited only by an incomplete Standard VI. pass. Such pupils would be more profitably engaged in revising the work of Standard VI. in a primary school. If they enter the high school to do Standard VI. work, we have reverted to the overlapping iniquity which we had deemed to be effectively purged away from our education system as operative in this part of the colony. The age qualification, being a purely arbitrary restriction, may result in rank injustice to individual pupils, and it certainly will result in mischief to the cause of primary education. Many pupils now pass too rapidly through their school course, and in this latest innovation we have a further premium put upon speed. The limitation as to age should be withdrawn, and a pupil's fitness to enter profitably on a course of secondary education should be determined by special examination at the Inspector's annual visit.

*District High Schools.*—A separate report on each of the district high schools has been prepared. We may merely mention here that the secondary department at Gore has been successful beyond our most sanguine expectations. It seems as if the department at Riverton, too, were to justify its existence; but in view of the latest conditions regulating admission to the high school it is questionable whether the secondary department at Winton can be raised above the experimental stage.

*Annual Visit.*—We find that if we are to overtake the work entailed by the inspection and examination of the schools and the other duties incidental to our department by the end of the year, we must commence making our annual visits at least a fortnight earlier than has been our custom hitherto.

*School Influences.*—We may, in closing, be allowed to enumerate the chief influences at work in shaping children's minds during their primary course, making the enumeration at the same time serve as the occasion of our pointing out one or two weak links in our present system.

The purpose of all school influences whatever is the moulding of a child's mind and character with a view to his becoming an efficient and honourable member of society. The chief influence is, of course, the mind and character of the teacher. These being determined to a great extent by the teacher's general and professional training, we find, in the absence of any adequate provision for such training, the weakest link of our system. The most that the majority of our teachers have had by way of training, in addition to their primary-school course, is a pupil-teacher's course, and preparation for the passing of the teachers' D and E examinations. Many have not even had the advantage of a pupil-teacher's course. It is a marvel, therefore, that the work of elementary education in this district has been so well done. Our present attitude towards this important matter, very largely an attitude of sheer indifference, is a reproach to us all. Let us hope that the time is not distant when all teachers will be introduced to their life's work under conditions