

ful workers who find that prolonged service has only brought more scanty rewards, and we express our hope that success may attend the efforts put forth to place teachers in a position less exposed to the anxieties attendant upon a fluctuating, and too often a diminishing, income. These considerations suggest another topic on which we venture to base another claim. There is too often a dearth of ordinary conveniences in connection with teachers' dwellings, few of which will bear comparison as to equipment with the workers' homes now being provided by the State. Recognising as we do the extent to which the senior, and indeed all pupils of a school, may profit by being brought in daily contact with evidences of care, neatness, cleanliness, regard for sanitation, and all the influences for good that emanate from a well-kept and well-ordered household, we feel that public funds will not be wasted if masters' wives receive assistance and encouragement in making their abodes, as far as may be, models of efficient "home rule" and domestic comfort.

In the routine of duties connected with our official visits to the schools no new departures were made during the past year. We feel, indeed, more strongly than ever that it would be unsafe to abandon to any greater extent than at present the examination test as a reliable index to the efficiency of a school. In those cases (and their number is not despicable) where it would be safest to minimise the application of the test, teachers themselves, and, we believe, a goodly majority of the pupils concerned still welcome the so-called ordeal, and are truly gratified by such opportunities as are afforded them to show that their year's labour has been directed to profitable ends. Ardent exponents of new ideas may pity those unfortunates who have been trained to "dance in chains" and who still cherish their bondage, but there is surely something to say on the other side. A practice which induces both teacher and taught to take a just pride in the work they undertake, to put the best there is in them to the performance of their task, and cheerfully to present the product, whether for favourable comment or for honest censure, does not stand utterly discredited in man's eyes, and we humbly hope is not entirely unacceptable in the sight of the Great Overseer.

In connection with the annual visit we have continued the practice of conferring with head teachers upon their proposals for the advancement of pupils in classes below Standard VI, and we are convinced that such conferences have had a salutary effect in checking to a very considerable extent the vicious policy of awarding undeserved promotion. This contention is supported by the results attendant upon the examination of Standard VI—in which, during the last year, 1,389 candidates presented themselves. Of these, 849 gained the "proficiency" certificate, 346 gained the guarantee of "competency," and only 194 failed to obtain any certificate. The figures quoted afford, in our opinion, satisfactory evidence on points of some importance. They show (speaking in round numbers) that more than fourteen pupils out of every two hundred enrolled, or, in other words, over 7 per cent. of the total attendance, remain to face the final test of examination in Standard VI. Naturally we would prefer seeing a much larger proportion. Again resorting to round numbers they show that seventeen out of every twenty-eight candidates examined in Standard VI succeeded in winning the proficiency certificate, that one out of every four was deemed worthy of a "competency," and that the failures did not appreciably exceed one-seventh of the total number entering the lists. To those who can spare time for an interval of calm reflection these facts convey some interesting material. They show that the prosperity enjoyed by the country at large for the last few years has brought a merely nominal increase in the number of children permitted to remain at school for the completion of a year in Standard VI. This fact is more than regrettable. On the brighter side, however, they indicate that sound judgment has generally been exercised in the promotion of children prior to Standard VI stage, and that at this stage their general preparation and training have been as efficient as may reasonably be expected.

We now propose to make brief reference to another matter intimately connected with the subjects under discussion. A year ago, at the general meeting of the New Zealand Educational Institute, and almost immediately afterwards at the triennial conference of Inspectors, resolutions were carried favouring a new departure in the system of standard promotions and also in some details connected with examination of Standard VI. With regard to the former it was agreed that the re-opening of schools after Christmas vacation should uniformly be adopted as the time most suitable for the reorganization of classes and for promotion from one standard to another, while with regard to the latter it was also recognised as a natural corollary that the examination of pupils seeking certificates for Standard VI should be held during the last two months of the year. The advantages of the proposals are so obvious that they meet with our full approval, though we clearly see grave difficulties in the way of their practical application. In North Canterbury these difficulties are accentuated in two directions—first by the volume of work to be overtaken by the Inspectors during the year, and next by the geographical distribution of schools over an extremely long and generally a rather narrow strip of country. On these grounds, and in view of the fact that no regulations bearing upon the proposals have yet been issued by the Department, we have hesitated to make any change in our routine, feeling that for most of our teachers the experiences of the last few years have not been altogether lacking in variety. Failing the issue of departmental instructions it is intended, early in the current year, to seek some pronouncement of the Board's views, and to make such changes in our programme as will bring these at once into operation.

It is noted with a good deal of contentment that the number of teachers remaining inexcusably ignorant of existing regulations, and apparently unfamiliar with the spirit pervading not only the new syllabus, but all modern conceptions of the ends of State education, continues to diminish. It is, however, painful to observe the utter mistrust of all change evinced by some workers of the highest character, whose attainments are far beyond the ordinary, and whose personal influence is of the best. They regard with superstitious reverence a system that has had its day, seeming to forget that progress must imply variety and change, that stagnation means death and all that is unwholesome, and that in education as in all other work "beneath the circuit of the sun" neither the beginning nor the end is in our time.