

elementary agriculture, brushwork, carton-work, or other forms of manual training suitable for younger pupils. Complaint is sometimes made that the manual and technical class instruction absorbs too much of the time of the senior children; but the question is one of good grounding in the lower classes, for where this has been sound and fairly wide, manual instruction becomes little more than a form of relaxation to senior pupils from their more serious studies.

The tendency for the Preparatory classes to increase is still maintained. At the close of the year 1907 35·7 per cent. of the pupils in the schools were returned as belonging to the Preparatory classes, and last year the percentage had increased to 36·9 of the total roll. The teaching of the junior children is done mainly by lady teachers, and in the larger schools very effective instruction is given in a wide and varied syllabus. The standards might be entered more rapidly were the syllabus more limited, but for obvious reasons this is hardly advisable. Three and sometimes four readers are prepared in the junior department, and many children are able to do the work of a weak S1 class. Such pupils, however, when promoted to the upper department of a school, are able to take two standards in a year, so that their progress is facilitated by the method adopted.

At the present time the work of teachers in the junior department might be much lessened, and certainly progress would be facilitated, by the non-admission of young children into the primary classes except at half-yearly periods. The present plan of admitting a new pupil to a school at any time because it has reached the school age is not only unnecessary, but it acts as a great hindrance to class teaching and progress.

The supply of free text-books to pupils below the Third Standard class and the monthly issue of the *School Journal* free to all classes suggests a question that is sometimes brought under our notice when visiting some of the poorer schools and settlements. The purchase of class-books in such places is always attended with some difficulty, but when hard times come the cost of the supply of necessary books where large families are concerned is often a heavy tax upon the home. Uniformity in the use of school-books can hardly be supported on the ground of a common benefit, but it would seem that if a *School Journal* is used in all schools of the Dominion and the same standard requirements are deemed necessary for all children irrespective of environment, a uniform set of reading-books might just as well be issued to the schools. All difficulties in the way of providing needful text-books for children would by this plan disappear, and the same chances would obtain in the case of all children attending the public schools. The *School Journal* has certainly gained in popularity during the year. The introduction of illustrations and the issue of special pictures to illustrate the flora and certain aspects of the physical geography of New Zealand have added very much to the value of the *Journal* as a reader and children's newspaper. The separate issue of a nature-study and elementary science number at intervals of three or four months, treating solely of the flora, fauna, &c., of the Dominion, would add yet more to the value of the *Journal*, as it might be made the medium of answering inquiries about specimens of natural history collected in the several education districts by the school-children.

The four district high schools have shown signs of increasing vitality, but the number attending each school is below what might fairly be expected. Gisborne District High School ceased to exist as such at the close of the year, as the Governors of the high school for that district have determined to open a high school in the rooms owned by them and which were occupied by the Board for the accommodation of secondary pupils. As the senior classes of a district high school are now visited by Inspectors from the Central Department, it has been deemed inadvisable to carry on any detailed examinations as heretofore, but to leave the work in the hands of each headmaster. Our inspection shows that much useful work is being done, and Waipawa, which opened at the beginning of the year, succeeded in obtaining seven passes in the Junior Civil Service Examination in December. Gisborne pupils also did well, and it may be said that all the district high schools were in good working-order at the close of the year.

A district high school is badly needed for the Wairoa town and county. At present a pupil wishing to take secondary work must go either to Gisborne or Napier, at heavy cost. There are sufficient children available, and something should be done by those who have charge of the duty of providing higher instruction in places where it is necessary.

The winter school for teachers that was held in Gisborne during August proved a great attraction to the teachers in the northern portion of the district. Between sixty and seventy teachers attended, and the classes held by Messrs. Grant and Clark, instructors, under the Wanganui Education Board, were of special benefit to the teachers who take elementary agriculture and carton-work in their schools. So, too, were the scientific lectures given by Dr. Kennedy, of Meeanee; Dr. De Lisle, of the Health Department; Mr. Gilruth and Mr. Bayliss, of the Agricultural Department; Mr. A. Hamilton, of the Dominion Museum; and the Inspector-General of Schools. Local bodies and the people generally were much interested, and showed their appreciation by subscribing near £100 towards meeting the expenses of teachers who attended from the remotest parts of the district. The work attempted may be set down as real progress in training teachers, and it would be a great thing in the way of advancing the work of education were similar classes held in other parts of the district in alternate years.

Although many things have been pointed out that call for improvement, there is a bright side to the picture as a whole. The teachers as a class are earnest in their work, and, if certificated, they are on the whole capable. Most of the young teachers carry out their duties with enthusiasm and much success. Morality among them is no sham. They set good examples to the children, are helpful in furthering the common interests of their districts, and many of them aim to keep well abreast and even a little ahead of the general progress around them. The children in school are well behaved, well cared for, and truancy is very uncommon. With the recent improvement in the matter of staffing and salaries, there is promise that the schools of the future will be maintained at a high standard of efficiency.

We are, &c.,

J. A. SMITH, Inspector.

H. HILL, Chief Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Hawke's Bay.