

indifferent musicians themselves. They would do well, however, to realise their limitations, and to make up by careful study and assiduous practice for any lack of previous training or of natural gift. . . . It is not given to every one to be a Santley or a Patti, but it is given to the humblest capacity to avoid such blunders as these.

**TECHNICAL SCHOOL CLASSES.**—Every Fifth and Sixth Standard pupil in this district has now had an opportunity of obtaining a two-years course of cookery under Miss Dillon. Dressmaking classes under Mrs. Malcolm Potts were started this year, and will be continued during the coming year. The woodwork class, under Mr. Austin, of the Grey District High School, continues to do excellent work. Agriculture, under Mr. Bruce, is taken at various schools with fair measure of success, and the usual classes in paper-folding, carton-work, &c., are taken in the larger schools. Altogether, as much manual instruction is being done as we can afford time for without seriously impairing the efficiency of our schools in other subjects, and in proportion to the number of our pupils we are doing as much as most towns in the Dominion.

**UNCERTIFICATED TEACHERS.**—It is very evident that the steps that have been taken during the past year or two to improve the status of teachers have not been taken too soon. It is impossible in this district to obtain certificated teachers for half our schools, and most Boards in the Dominion seem to be more or less in the same position. It is to be hoped that the inducement of the improved salaries and the satisfactory superannuation scheme now held out will attract larger numbers to the profession, and that those now in the ranks will see it to be worth their while to qualify fully for the honourable work in which they are engaged.

**GENERAL.**—Trees have been supplied to all schools this year for planting, and thus a first and certainly much needed step has been taken in the direction of improving and beautifying our school grounds. Regarding the school-work generally, I have only to say that the teachers of this district are as earnest and hardworking a body as any in the Dominion, and if, as the poet says, "'Tis not in mortals to command success," at least they do their very best to deserve it. As regards the working of our school curriculum, I am of opinion that the present system demands too much effort on the part of the teachers and too little on the part of the pupils. Every nut must be cracked—everything made easy and pleasant for our present-day pupil. Knowledge so easily acquired is just as easily forgotten. Self-reliance and determination are to-day as essential to success in life as they were fifty years ago, yet our present Sixth Standard pupils are woefully lacking in these characteristics. Is this the outcome of modern systems and methods of teaching? Time alone will answer that question. Owing to the immense amount of ground to be covered, the subjects now simply jostle one another, with the result that too little time is left for the essentials of education, and too much is devoted to mere educational "trimmings." There is a lack of definiteness about the present educational goal; and, while the older system, which aimed more largely at definite instruction, had perhaps its defects, it is a moot point whether the mental spoon-feeding, the coaxing and coddling methods, which are so often the outcome of the present *régime*, are likely to prove any very notable improvement. The now all-prevalent notion that memorising must be as far as possible eliminated from the school course, I believe to be vicious and mischievous. In the presence of your modern education expert—so-called—a teacher must only mention "memory work" with bated breath, yet the memory is recognised by all psychologists as one of the leading faculties of the intellect, and on plain psychological principles, and according to strict scientific method, must have its due share of training in any true education system. A high American authority on psychology, writing on the human intellect, says, "The consideration of the development and growth of the intellect furnishes the only true principles by which to regulate the culture of the intellect, and to arrange the order in which the different branches of knowledge should be studied. . . . To teach pure observation, or the mastery of objects or words, without classification or interpretation is to be ignorant even to simple stupidity. But, on the other hand, to stimulate the thought-processes to unnatural and prematurely painful efforts is to do violence to the laws which nature has written in the constitution of the intellect. Even thought and reflection teach us that, before the processes of thought can be applied, materials must be gathered in large abundance; and, to provide for these, nature has made acquisition and memory easy and spontaneous for childhood, and reasoning and science difficult and unnatural." Again I quote the same eminent educationalist, "In the earlier periods of life the spontaneous memory should be stimulated and enriched by appropriate studies. The child should learn stories, verses, poems, facts, and dates as freely and as accurately as it can be made to respond to such tasks. . . . On the other hand, to anticipate the development of the reflective powers by forcing upon the intellect studies which imply and require these capacities is to commit the double error of misusing the time which is especially appropriate to simple acquisition, and of constraining the intellect to efforts which are untimely and unnatural. The modern practice of occupying the minds of children with the reasons of things—i.e., with the laws, principles, &c., in the forms of astronomy, of natural or mental philosophy, natural theology, &c.—is one that cannot be too earnestly deprecated, or too soon abandoned by those who would train the mind according to the methods of nature, or adapt its studies and pursuits to the order in which its powers and functions were intended to be evolved." Not only as a matter of psychological principle, but on the ground also of practical consistency, it is imperative that attention should be paid to the acquisition of knowledge, and that a certain measure of regular, definite, systematic instruction should be driven home from Standard I right up to the close of the school course. For what is the formal terminus of the present system? From the point of view of this syllabus, the culminating-point and final hall-mark of the primary system is what is known as the proficiency certificate—a certificate given only after a sufficiently exacting examination. If the years up to Standard V are spent in mere playing at learning, and the pupil is then confronted in Standard VI with a stiff examination, the result must almost necessarily be failure and fiasco. Unless amendment on the lines I have indicated takes place, this result will be more and more apparent as the years go by; but it may be permitted to us to hope that, if we are