

substantial margin on which precedence may be claimed, and neither of them enjoys the facilities just referred to. If laxity and indifference have taken root so deeply in a community inclined to plume itself upon a high pitch of comfort and prosperity, it is clear that nothing we may say is likely to awaken its sense of shame or bring it to repentance.

(VI.) In the compilation of schemes of work increasing skill is manifested, and in these there are but few outstanding defects common to a large proportion of the schools. Instances occur in which a rare selective power has been concentrated on the wide resources of well-stored minds, where such subjects as physical geography, elementary science, and nature-study proceed hand-in-hand, where the intelligent treatment of geography lends interest to lessons on history, where the story of advancing civilisation and the growth of political freedom, dissociated from the tramp of armed hosts and the casualties of the battle-field, is shown to be linked no less closely with the study of climate and of geological formations. This faculty for judicious selection, the power to recombine the facts thus gathered, and the comprehensive outlook which enables variety of material to be brought either into vivid contrast or into one harmonious blending, are elements of special value in the equipment of a teacher, and indispensable to the man who aspires to mastership in his craft. The topics above named, and the form of dovetailing suggested, are only taken at random to represent a process and methods embracing infinite variety of selection and combination. In their fuller treatment we have so far omitted to mention the pen, the pencil, the brush, and the modelling-tool as convenient media by which to reproduce, to illustrate, and to visualise the matter dealt with, mainly because these had received notice in a report some few years ago. To work on the lines indicated requires some solid reading—perhaps a little plain thinking. We would fain hope that neither accomplishment is yet obsolete, but frankly we are, here and there, without confident assurance on the point. Undoubtedly a taste for reading is much more common now than it was even a few years ago, but so far we cannot say it is unduly fastidious. Too many of the books seen in general use show that the reader's judgment is unreliable with regard to the difference between genuine literature and a vast body of material to which some other briefly contemptuous epithet seems more applicable. We feel it a duty to the Department to note that in the senior classes the *School Journal* is rendering valuable service in stimulating a desire for reading outside school-hours, and in arousing interest in current events which cannot fail to widen the mental horizon of those whose equipment it was meant to improve.

Where teachers are not mere automata, methods of instruction must naturally vary, and we do not think objection should be taken even to considerable variations in method so long as their underlying principles are sufficiently sound. The method will naturally reflect the teacher's individuality, and wherever there is evidence of firm purpose, clear insight, steady industry, and strong common-sense the methods are not likely to go far astray. A goodly number of North Canterbury schools are staffed with teachers whose training, attainments, character, and experience eminently fit them for the positions they hold, and at whose hands the quality of the instruction leaves nothing to be desired. While, however, much has been done in the last few years to improve the status and prospects of the teacher, we watch with regret the growing difficulty experienced in obtaining qualified candidates for positions in the remoter parts of the district, and our sympathies are with pioneer settlers whose children are penalised in their preparation for the race of life because the parents exhibit some sturdy virtues which the dweller in towns professes to admire.

In no scheme of elementary education have teachers hitherto been granted such opportunities for placing the impress of their own personality upon their work. We feel assured that North Canterbury is especially fortunate in enjoying the services of a large body of workers animated by that spirit which inspired Matthew Arnold's finest efforts—workers—

Not like the men of the crowd  
Who all around us to-day  
Bluster or cringe, and make life  
Hideous, and arid, and vile;  
But souls temper'd with fire,  
Fervent, heroic, and good,  
Helpers and friends of mankind.

We have, &c.,

THOS. RITCHIE,	} Inspectors.
T. S. FOSTER,	
E. K. MULGAN,	
WM. BROCK,	

The Chairman, Education Board, North Canterbury.

#### SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 31st March, 1909.

I have the honour to submit a general report on the public schools of the South Canterbury District for the year 1908.

During the year there were seventy-six schools in operation, the same number as last year. The usual visits were paid to the schools, those in the earlier portion of the year being without notice, and from July to November visits with notice were paid. Reports of the visits were considered in committee before presentation to the Board at the usual monthly meetings, and were afterwards forwarded to the schools to be preserved among the records. There were also submitted to the Board reports