

teacher if he could master the syllabus, and to take off his hat to every Sixth Standard boy who could pass an examination in the syllabus. Notwithstanding this, important points of old-fashioned history and geography did seem by the pressure of work to be neglected. With regard to the syllabus generally, and the working of it, he did not profess to speak with authority. He thought the articulation of the children was better, and that the oral composition had had a good effect. But, speaking as a secondary-school master, he did think the point emphasized that morning—the question of grammar—was a very serious one, as it affected those children who came from the primary to the secondary schools. He did not for a moment say that formal grammar was necessary for a lad who went out into life. The position was different in the case of a student who intended to learn another language. He did not wish them to come to the secondary school knowing what was called formal grammar, but he did think it was essential that they should come to the secondary school knowing the parts of speech. It might seem astonishing to some members of the Conference that he should even suggest that very promising pupils came to the secondary schools unable to do simple parsing; but he could give examples of that—examples of boys who had qualified for scholarships who said they had never done analysis of a simple sentence, though they had done the general analysis of a complex sentence. He did not like to find fault in that way, because in many respects the syllabus had had a good effect on the children. But the members of the Conference were criticizing, and they ought to tell one another little points that could be remedied. It was possible the defect was due to the hard work of the standards, which were kept too much in watertight compartments. Possibly the pupils learned the methods in the earlier standards, and the work had not been continued and revised on reaching the Sixth Standard. Indeed, in arithmetic also there seemed need for more revision of earlier work. There was, he thought, too great a tendency to unduly and prematurely attempt to develop the reasoning-powers of children. If they looked at the minds of children they would see that there were two outstanding features—one was curiosity, and the other was the power of memory. It seemed to him that information rightly conveyed, which satisfied the curiosity, would itself have an educative effect, and they had gone too far in discarding memory-work. They could not get on without certain technical terms. Speaking generally, he might say that in the secondary schools they found they did not get the same promising children now for secondary-school purposes as they got sixteen years ago. They had formed that opinion in Canterbury; but it could hardly be due to the present syllabus, which was only four years old.

Mr. FIRTH said he could do little more than reiterate what Mr. Bevan-Brown had pointed out, and support what Professors Gilray and Haslam said with regard to grammar. With regard to what had been said to the effect that the want of knowledge of the elementary parts of parsing and analysis could not be set against the present syllabus he quite agreed, but the speaker seemed to imply that there had not been a similar want before. He thought there had been such a want for a long time past. He could give examples of that. Boys coming from some schools had a very fair knowledge of the elements of parsing and analysis, whilst boys from other schools had absolutely no knowledge of those subjects at all. In one respect he differed from Mr. Bevan-Brown: that gentleman said he thought that in the matter of articulation and pronunciation children were better now than they used to be. He should say that the tendency was rather the other way. He knew that New Zealand writers had said in English papers and magazines that the New Zealand boy had no accent. The only conclusion he could draw was either that such writers did not know what they were talking about or that they were not wise men. The person who said that the New Zealand boy spoke English as it should be spoken was talking nonsense. He thought the tendency here, at any rate, was not towards improvement, but the reverse.

Mr. HOWELL asked whether the fact that those who were concerned with secondary education found that in some respects, at any rate, the training of the primary schools did not provide them with pupils well adapted for the work of secondary schools did not seem to point to the desirability of an earlier differentiation than was at present carried out in our educational system. He had long felt that in New Zealand secondary education began too late, and that those boys who were going on to a secondary school to receive an education preparatory to the University would do well to enter the secondary school, say, at eleven years of age—a common age in England. They would then be able to receive such a training as would obviate the difficulties which masters of secondary schools at present found in preparing their pupils for the University. It would also enable the system to meet the needs of those pupils who when they left the primary schools did not go on to the secondary schools or even to the technical schools, but who went direct to work, for it would permit the establishment of the primary vocational schools which had already been mentioned by Mr. George. It must be borne in mind that the great majority of the pupils of the primary schools finished their education—if one might use the term—when they left those schools. They had to go out into life and take up their occupations with no further education than they had received there. It had been said—and he thought it was often justly said—that primary education was a one-sided education—that it was too bookish. In the towns of New Zealand, at any rate, very much had been done to correct that one-sidedness; but he was very sorry to hear a remark made that morning by one of the primary-school teachers to the effect that there was a feeling that too much had been done in this direction. He would be very surprised and sorry indeed to learn that that was an expression of the general feeling. It would seem to him to be altogether retrograde, and was contrary to the best educational opinion in England, America, and even in Germany, where in recent years enormous strides had been made in the introduction of manual work in the later years of school training. In two respects he thought that in recent years there had been a considerable improvement in the equipment of the child going from the primary schools. He referred first to the capacity to observe, and secondly to the power to express either in drawing or in writing what had been observed. He regarded these as extremely valuable acquisitions, for the power of correct observation and expression was of the highest import-