

results of head teachers' annual examinations for promotion. These class lists were usually supplied by head teachers in such good order that we had very little fault to find with either their compilation or with the mode of determining the classification.

Though throughout the decade following 1897 there had been a gradual falling-off in the number of children in the district, since 1907 there has been an increase each year, so that the total now is higher by about 100 than at any previous time. Ninety-nine of those in Standard VII are pupils of the secondary classes of one or other of the four district high schools. Standards V and I are slightly lower than in 1910, and Standard VI is also lower by 59. All other classes are larger, especially the preparatory, in which the number exceeds the previous year's return by 136.

The Inspector-General of Schools in two successive reports has called attention to the marked increase of recent years in the proportion of pupils in the preparatory classes, which in 1910 represented 37.2 per cent. of the whole. For this district the percentage was also 37, but this year it is even higher, 38.1 per cent. His conclusion seems to us inevitable, that the main cause of this increase is that the children now usually spend a longer time in the preparatory classes than they formerly spent; and one or two instances have been noted by us this year of a large class well advanced in work of First Standard quality but still retained in the upper preparatory division. In this district, too, the average age of passing Standard I has also increased of late years; for example, in 1896 it was 8 years 4 months, in 1901 8 years 9 months, in 1906 8 years 10 months, and now 9 years 1 month. In Standards II and III also very similar changes are shown, but years ago the ages of Standards IV, V, and VI more closely approximated those of to-day. In the matter of promotion, we are satisfied that the interests of individual children are too little studied. Very rarely, for example, do we find that exceptionally bright children have passed through two standard classes in the year, though in the lower classes this is quite possible of attainment without any great disturbance of the usual school routine. For the promotion of children from the preparatory classes a higher standard of efficiency than formerly is probably the general practice, and evidently to avoid troubles of organization such promotion, though merited before, is too often deferred till the end of the year. To quote the Inspector-General, "The facts are sufficiently serious to demand very careful examination"; and there is certainly room for questioning whether the average child of to-day is as intelligent as that of, say, five-and-twenty years ago. The presence of certain children very backward, of slow development, those upon whom in ordinary course even a capable teacher can make but little impression, is becoming more common, so that in the larger centres appeals are being made for special schools to be established for the treatment of children of this particular class. Their presence in any numbers—and examples now are to be found in any large school—must tend to increase the proportion that the junior division bears to the whole, and also the average age of that section. From a study of eugenics the cause of such increase might be determined, but that an increase exists a close observer can hardly doubt.

Some subjects of instruction call for special comment or for criticism of the methods adopted.

ENGLISH.—In the treatment of almost all branches of this subject we find much to commend. In reading and writing 88 per cent. of the schools (omitting from the calculation those in Grade 0 as too insignificant for consideration) were thoroughly efficient; in spelling 84 per cent., and in composition 77 per cent. The reading has invariably been tested from prepared text-books, as we consider it unreasonable to expect children to read well at sight from previously unseen matter. The Imperial Reader and the *School Journal* have been most commonly employed, though in some instances the Royal Crown or Graphic Series or the Historical Reader is used. The continuous or supplementary readers supplied to Standards III and IV have been warmly welcomed and fully utilized by a few, but in general they have been too little appreciated. Some have read them as additional readers, but too many teachers have neglected them entirely, contenting themselves with two literary readers only. The fear that such an innovation would involve an additional burden should not be a deterrent to their use, as the interest aroused in the children by such works as those supplied should more than compensate for any additional labour required in their preparation, which should be confined to such brief explanation as would render the general sense of the passage intelligible to the class. In our large schools—those in which each teacher has no more than two standard classes—three readers at least should be in constant use, and one of these might well be a continuous reader. We notice that the issue of free books for 1912 may also include a supply of supplementary or continuous readers for Standards II, I, and preparatory.

In individual cases and in particular schools we still find faults on which we have so often commented, especially of enunciation and vocalization—faults from which some of our teachers are not entirely free; and, although the reading of the scholars is generally fluent and expressive, we are now and then disagreeably surprised at their ignorance of the force and meaning of some of the words employed. Good reading necessitates the correction of faulty mannerisms, the adoption from the first of a natural tone of voice and of the practice of reading in phrases, the ability to group the words correctly, and, most of all, the development of general intelligence, for without it the reader cannot maintain the intimate interdependence of eye, ear, and voice so essential to expression, the product of a thorough appreciation of the author's meaning. In regard to either recitation or reading it is in this, the highest phase of the subject, the entering into the spirit of the author, that failure is most common. Sometimes the teacher's ear, through time and constant abuse, seems to become deadened, and an habitual fault—a whining monotone, for example, or a strained high pitch of voice, that robs the lesson of all delight—is allowed to pass unchecked. In one education district a teacher of elocution has been appointed for the training of teachers, and the best results are anticipated from his direct influence upon the work of the children. The so-called "colonial twang" we in no way condone, but critics are too prone to dilate upon and exaggerate this defect, which suffers little by comparison with the uncouth dialects still frequently