

On leaving the Board's service we may be excused for recalling the past of twenty-one years ago, so that a comparison may be made between the ruling educational conditions then and now.

The school syllabus universally followed was far less complicated than at present. The different branches of English (composition had but recently become a pass subject) and arithmetic received the main attention from both teachers and Inspectors, and next to these geography, needlework, and drawing, the last named having just then come into prominence as a school subject. Singing, drill, and elementary science were evidently far from being even generally taught. The pass system, all standards being still under the arbitrary control of the Inspector alone, dominated the teaching, which perforce gave undue prominence to the pass subjects, that loomed large in the eyes of children and parents. Every child, irrespective of ability, of physical fitness, even of regularity of attendance, was expected to reach a higher stage at the next examination. Failure spelt suffering for the unfortunate teacher. In rigidity syllabus and system anticipated a modern war-machine. A great uplifting came with the 1904 syllabus, giving teachers a wider choice of subjects and freedom of classification, the promotion of children in all standards being from that time made by the head teacher. The school life of the little one has been brightened by the introduction of more rational methods of treatment. Singing and physical culture have become general—nay, almost universal—and of late the benefits of medical inspection and advice have also been added. Free story-readers and *School Journals*, nature-study and school-gardening, modelling and various other forms of handwork, brush and colour drawing, swimming and organized school games, have given a charm, a variety, a new method of training from the making or doing of something, a zest, even an artistic touch to school life both inside and out of the class-room walls. For the children of the upper standards the introduction of nature-study, observational geography, elementary physical measurements, and suggested courses of elementary science has given a much-needed scientific trend to development. Nor has the purely practical side been in any way neglected. The conservative pedagogue of earlier days, if still surviving, has scarcely yet ceased to lift his hands in mock horror at the amount and variety of manual training undertaken. Here woodwork, metal-work, cookery, dressmaking, or dairy-work has been taught at all the larger schools, or wherever the children could be conveniently brought to a centre, and now every Sixth Standard child is indirectly compelled to take some such course or elementary agriculture or an equivalent. Nor has development meant only mere expansion into different channels—the whole course has widened and deepened also. A Seventh Standard syllabus has been framed, and subjects hitherto considered strictly secondary have been included. The formation of district high schools has further extended the range of work into the domain of the secondary school, and the institution of junior and senior free places and of Junior and Senior National Scholarships has thrown wide the doors of secondary training to all school-children, and allowed the selected few free access to the innermost room, the University itself. Technical schools and colleges, with a vast array of subjects in the curriculum, have been established at different centres to carry on the education of our youth beyond the primary, and it may be beyond the secondary stage, but for the most part on lines divergent from those of the University. To enable our teachers to meet the increased demands upon them and to better equip them, especially for dealing with subjects of handwork and manual training, special grants have been made and classes formed for the instruction of teachers. A Training College for this, among others, of the middle districts has been established, and to it pupil-teachers and other qualified entrants to the teaching profession have access and receive training in scholarship and professional technique. Grants have also been made and classes formed for the instruction by correspondence of uncertificated untrained teachers. All of these educational activities except the course at the University have been under the control and management of the Board, the supervision and largely the organization of the classes mentioned being added to the duties of the Board's Inspectors.

As the character of the work has changed for the better, so also have the buildings in use. At several of our largest centres new and well-equipped class-rooms have been erected to replace old, insanitary, decayed buildings. Many even of the newer buildings in 1893 were too lofty and barn-like for effective teaching, their vastness and lack of ceiling rendering them defective both in regard to ventilation and acoustics. Schools erected recently with the Department's approval have been of a more compact and serviceable type, and though all our present schools cannot be regarded as realizing ideals, one cannot but notice a very general improvement during the time under review. In the opinion of teachers the old discarded Toitoti Valley School was in its day the best in the district, and teachers now at the Nelson Girls' Central can judge how ill that "best" compares with that of to-day.

Possibly greater differences are to be noted in the rates of remuneration for teaching service than in other particulars. Salaries were not calculated then strictly upon an attendance basis, as quality and length of service, responsibility, locality, or the provision of a teacher's house might weigh with the Board in determining particular cases. General cases can, however, be readily compared. The highest salary paid in the district (Nelson Boys') was £300. The similar position, but with an increased roll, is now £450. Outside of Nelson the best head teachers' positions were—Reefton, £250 (now £350); Westport, £240 (now £440); Lower Wakefield, £160 (now £250); Richmond, £160 (now £270). The roll numbers at each of these schools, except Reefton, which has remained stationary, have greatly increased. The salaries of sole teachers varied considerably, but rarely did any one receive the minimum amount now paid to a teacher of nine children—£110. Take, for example, Clifton Terrace, with roll unchanged—the salary was £80, but now £140. But of all in the teaching service pupil-teachers and assistants received the most severe treatment. The pupil-teacher, then called a probationer, entered the service at £18 a year, and received an annual increment of only £6. The assistants received fixed salaries, and £48 was a very common allowance, though one name appears on the pay-sheets at £42. The minimum salary for an assistant now begins at £110. If we compare the assistants