

called lower S1. There is no objection to this, as any standard may be divided into an upper and lower division, but in some quarters there has grown up an idea that a transfer from lower S1 to upper S1 means promotion. In one sense it may, as the upper class may be doing work a little in advance of the lower, but such an idea has a tendency to retard promotion to S2. The syllabus does not recognize a lower S1 otherwise than as Standard I, and promotion from lower S1 cannot really be made unless to S2. The result is that a number of children who have taken two years to obtain promotion from S1 to S2 have been at school more than three years before they reach S2. The retardation referred to above is not confined to Otago. As a matter of fact the percentage of children in the preparatory division in Otago is 31·64 of the total roll, while the percentage for the Dominion in 1918 was 33·83, and was as high as 36·33 in 1914. Nevertheless, this proportion is still too high. Last year we noted that the percentage of S4 children reaching S6 had shown a steadily rising tendency since 1910, and in 1918 reached 60 per cent. It is gratifying to note that for 1919 the percentage is 65—a marked increase on that of the previous year. While our teachers by increasing the efficiency of the schools can give considerable assistance in reducing the wastage referred to, yet the prevailing economic and social conditions are too strong to enable them to remove completely the cause of complaint. If increased efficiency in the nation is desired, the real remedy is to raise the compulsory age, and to make provision for more practical work for those children who are somewhat below the average in attainments. We dealt with the question of classes for “backward” children very fully in our last report, and we have only to add that we hope the Board will consider this matter at the most favourable opportunity.

*Proficiency Examination.*—For the proficiency certificate 1,768 candidates from the public schools presented themselves. Of these 1,356, or 77 per cent. secured the certificate of proficiency, and 172 gained the certificate of competency. This shows a decrease of nearly 3 per cent. on the results of the previous year. In addition 233 candidates from private schools, King Edward Technical College, and secondary schools were examined for certificates of proficiency.

As in our report of last year we commented in detail on most matters pertaining to the functions of our schools, we refrain from doing so now, but express the opinion that, with but few exceptions, the work of our schools is carried out on good lines, the pupils being well trained to put forth their best efforts and to look upon their school experience primarily as a training for life where the best lessons they can learn are honest endeavour and a conscientious discharge of duty. At no period of our history has the cultivation of this sentiment been more imperative, as in all societies and communities honest exertion and increased productivity of labour are the essential conditions to our national rehabilitation.

In only a few schools has the school excursion or class walk formed part of the general work. This practice, if undertaken with directness of aim and carried out after a suitable preparation by teacher and pupil, is a most important factor in real education, as it provides means for the study of things in their environment. Too often we find lessons given on natural objects in unnatural isolation, with the result that the relationships and the adaptation to environment are disregarded, and thus “the forests are obscured by the leaves.” During inspection we have frequently been struck with the necessity for utilizing our public institutions in our system of instruction, for too often the references in the reading-books are unappreciated through the lack of exploitation of such sources of information as are supplied by our public libraries, picture-galleries, and museums. In order that another source of refined pleasure may be accessible to the pupils of our city and suburban schools, we again emphasize the desirableness of familiarizing the senior pupils with the characteristics of a good picture; then an intelligent observational attitude will take the place of aimless gazing on the part of young people when paying all-to-infrequent visits to our picture-galleries.

Fortunately in our primary schools we are getting away from that system of education where the reasoning-powers were trained by abstract processes without the aid of eye and hand, where the brain was crammed with facts, and where the application of principles to the circumstances of daily life was rendered difficult because the pupil was not taught how to make such application, nor was he confronted with evidence of the utility of the knowledge he was acquiring. Now that the teacher is impressed with the necessity for applied knowledge and the consequent efficacy of things as educative media, we hope that manual training and science will command adequate consideration in our training college, and that the laboratory and the workshop will form as essential a part of the school as does now the school-garden.

Instead of erecting school buildings with a view to a permanency suggesting that educational wisdom will be interred in our own graves, the cost of securing the adjuncts mentioned above might be greatly lessened by part of the buildings being less costly in construction; this would not only provide means for securing a necessary adjunct, but also remove the difficulties of adapting our buildings to the progressive views of future educationists. At present the manual work consists principally of woodwork for the boys and cookery for the girls of S5 and S6 of the town and suburban schools and the district high schools, while horticulture is carried on generally, but we are so convinced of the high educative and practical value of woodwork and cookery that we keep on hoping that the facilities for their introduction to our country schools may soon be provided, and in the meantime teachers' classes may be started in these subjects, when the enthusiasm of our teachers will compensate for the want of perfect conditions, and the usual compromise between the ideal and the practical will result. Through the medium of these subjects our schools are laying the foundation of future hobbies, and if it is true that “a man's a man accordingly as he does what he hasn't to do,” there is every indication that the citizens of the future will be intelligent gardeners with a large share of excellent characteristics, mental and moral, that the primal industry is so effective in cultivating.

We note with pleasure that many of our teachers are doing much to improve the environment of the pupils by planting ornamental native shrubs, which Mr. Green, with wise provision, and a keen appreciation of the decorative value of much of the New Zealand flora has sent from his nursery in connection with the Training College. As over seventeen thousand plants have now been distributed, and ample provision has been made for the continuance of this good work, we confidently look forward to the time when all of our school-grounds will be things of beauty.