

departments, pupils being kept an inordinate time before being promoted to the junior division. To-day the centre of retardation has been transferred to Standards IV and V; and even when allowance is made for natural causes, such as immigration, change of schools, entering school at seven years, foreign or Maori birth, there is an excessive number of pupils who are ranked in age as retardates. We hesitate to express the opinion that pupils are deliberately retarded in Standard V so that a good showing may be made by the Standard VI pupils in the Proficiency Examination. Certainly it does not appear that steady efforts are being made to give special attention to the older pupils, who, by virtue of their age and normal intelligence, should be a class or two higher than they really are. "Once a retardate, always a retardate," seems to be a doctrine with many head teachers, especially if the retardate is an import from another school. This should not be. It is pleasing to note that the evil of retardation is less noticeable in sole-charge and two-teacher schools than in large town schools.—(*Auckland.*)

Our survey revealed the fact that the class in which a child is placed is no clear indication of either his mental capacity or of his academic progress. In every class the mentality ranges from deficiency to genius, and the pupils' achievement in school-work corresponds to this range. The overlapping of classes in point of achievement indicates that an unsatisfactory state of affairs exists with regard to our classification. Something like a condition of chaos exists. One of the most necessary reforms is a more scientific system of classification which will make due provision for the needs of children who deviate from the normal—especially those who have little academic ability and those whose mentality is of a very high order. The country cannot afford to neglect these children.—(*Taranaki.*)

In our opinion the ages fixed for determining retardation are too low. The number of retardates taken at the present ages is disproportionately large. This year, for instance, there were as many as 196 extreme cases—*i.e.*, two years above the ages fixed. An examination of the schedules shows that there are good reasons for most cases. Remedial measures appear most effective in the preparatory to Standard II classes. Retardation in the preparatory classes of our largest schools has been almost eliminated.—(*Nelson.*)

Retardation on the score of arithmetic is disappearing, but is not unknown. To counteract the tendency towards such retardation it might seem advisable to encourage dual classification on a large scale—*i.e.*, the placing of a pupil in a different standard in arithmetic from his standard in English if the former subject is relatively backward. We regret to say that there is still, as in the past, a tendency to allow arithmetic to dominate the classification of pupils, and that the promotion tests in this subject set by some headmasters go beyond syllabus requirements.—(*Canterbury.*)

We hope that teachers will make a further effort to reduce retardation. A solution probably will be found along the lines of classification on a scientific basis. It should be borne in mind that a pupil may be regarded as retarded when he is not usefully employing his natural powers, and is not undergoing continuous maximum development according to those powers. During the year we used the Stanford reading test, which is applicable to Standard III to Standard VI. A consideration of a group of recorded results reveals the fact that 37 per cent. of Standard V pupils and 12½ per cent. of the Standard IV pupils made scores equal to or greater than the Standard VI median score, and 15 per cent. of Standard VI pupils and 27 per cent. of Standard V made scores equal to or less than the Standard IV median score. These facts are significant: the pupils of Standard IV and Standard V in the first category are retarded; those of the Standard VI and Standard V in the second category are overweighted. A proper use of appropriate tests in the classification of pupils would go far towards the removal of the causes of retardation and ineffective teaching.—(*Wellington.*)

*Proficiency Examinations.*—With adequate safeguards it is hoped that it will be possible further to extend the accrediting system. We are of opinion that the added responsibility placed upon headmasters, many of whom are potential Inspectors, will raise their professional status, and at the same time the element of chance which is always a factor in a single examination test will be eliminated. It is to be noted that the children respond by steady effort throughout the year, when it is known that the result of such effort will be the award of certificates without further examination of an exterior nature. The inculcation of the habit of steady effort is in itself sufficient justification for the introduction of the new system.—(*Auckland.*)

This year a more intensive use of the synchronous method and of the system of accrediting was made. Most head teachers, among whom we are pleased to note not a few of the younger teachers, formed quite reliable estimates of their pupils' work; but others, some of them with considerable experience, appeared to have rather an exaggerated estimate of the examination work done by their pupils. The new form of examination in arithmetic and English is a distinct improvement. One advantage is that a greater variety of questions gives a better chance of finding out whether adequate courses have been covered. Another is that emphasis is now set on the more important phases of a subject—*e.g.*, on rapid oral or mental work in arithmetic, on the understanding and appreciation of English prose and verse, and on the synthetic side of grammar rather than on the analytic. The papers, too, are much more easily marked, and there are now fewer requests for reconsideration of arithmetic, it being generally recognized that a pupil who fails in this subject cannot lay the blame on the difficulty or unevenness of the tests.—(*Canterbury.*)

*Libraries.*—In the great majority of the schools of this district libraries have been established. Books are now comparatively inexpensive, and publishers offer a variety that extends from the primers upwards. The recognized correlation between reading and intelligence opens up a wide field for teachers, whose labours will be lightened and rendered more profitable by the systematic encouragement of the use of library books. There are well-stocked teachers' libraries at two centres in the district, and the Board pays outward postage.—(*Taranaki.*)