

mode of life, the surroundings, and the pursuit of the people in the town; and it seems only natural to infer that the education of the children should be built on these different aspects of living. The children cannot conceive the facts of English history, they cannot conceive the outside facts of political geography, nor can they conceive the definitions of English grammar." And will such mental facts assist in making the children better citizens, better mechanics, better artisans and farmers? I have a high opinion of the value of history, geography, and grammar of the right sort and rightly pursued, but I think there are many subjects of more importance to the happiness of children and to the prosperity of this district which might be substituted in the school curriculum. The future bushman, ploughman, and mechanic are provided with the same educational tools to perform entirely different functions in life, with the result that words have become an equivalent for ideas, memory for mind, and instruction for education."

The education of children, if it is to be worth anything at all, must be of two kinds, general and special. After the training of the organs of sensation—sight, feeling, taste, smell, sound—there are only two school-subjects which are common and needful for all children, whether living in town, country, or bush. These two subjects are reading and writing. Like air and water, they are needful for all our children, reading and writing being the pictorial or objective means of conveying thoughts and facts without the employment of vocal sounds. As soon, therefore, as these arts have been fully mastered, specialisation in education really begins—or, rather, it should begin, but does not. It is for this reason that I am not in favour of the present standard Syllabus of instruction. Whilst I believe in Government control in the matter of public education, it is not necessary to have Chinese uniformity with it. The Central Government should formulate by generalisations, but local government should administer and adapt to the special needs of districts. I am totally opposed to any limit being put upon what children may learn, but I am equally opposed to a Central Government saying what children shall learn. The work which is asked to be accomplished under the "revised standards" can be done by children, but it is at the expense of superficiality, and, not being adaptive, the results cannot be permanent. The carrying-out of the new standard regulations has proved disastrous in a number of schools in this district during the year just closing. Some of the schools are unable to take up all the class subjects, but the work in the pass subjects has been well prepared. According to the regulations, none of the pupils can pass, simply because the class subjects have not been taught, and children cannot proceed to a higher standard simply because the class subjects are not taught. In these same schools excellent results are obtained in what are known as "additional subjects." The teachers are capable, satisfactory progress has been made during the year, but the progress has not been according to stereotyped departmental requirements. Had I the power of doing so without breaking the standard regulations, several hundred children would have passed to a higher standard who are now kept back simply because class subjects like history and elementary science have not been prepared. Any one acquainted with our small country and bush schools must know the utter absurdity of demanding so many subjects from children who are instructed under difficulties a hundred times greater than are to be met with in our larger schools; and, were liberty of choice in the matter of school-subjects left in the hands of School Committees and Education Boards, I am satisfied that the school-work would be far better than it is, and that the teaching would be in the direction of adapting the work to the special needs of districts. All that is required to make our education system a great blessing to this country is to prepare an adapted and differentiated standard Syllabus of instruction on the lines indicated above. The choice of subjects other than reading and writing could then be left in the hands of School Committees and Education Boards, and an impetus would be given to the introduction of technical instruction into the schools, which it is impossible to attempt with any hope of success at the present time. We want a feasible scheme of instruction, not based upon what England does or upon what France does or would like to do, but upon what we ourselves ought to do under the varying conditions of life in this country, so as to produce industrious, intelligent, and hardy citizens, who will look upon the colony as their home and their fatherland.

I have, &c.,

J. G. Wilson, Esq., M.H.R., Chairman, Education Committee. W. HILL, B.A., F.G.S.,
Inspector of Schools.

Mr. JOHN S. GOODWIN to the CHAIRMAN, Education Committee.

SIR,—

Auckland, 5th December, 1887.

I have the honour, in reply to your circular of the 10th November, *re* the working of our Education Act, to offer the following remarks:—

1. I am of opinion that the age upon which the capitation grant is paid might be raised to six years without being productive of harm educationally. I consider that children below that age are better at home engaged in healthful play than cooped up within the walls of a schoolroom: it might be different were it possible to establish throughout the colony infant schools in the charge of those who, having made that branch their special study, are competent to conduct these schools upon something akin to the Kindergarten system.

2. The payment of fees for instruction in the higher standards would destroy the integrity of our existing system. If fees were chargeable, parents would probably wish to prescribe the course of study to be pursued in those standards, and great diversity of opinion upon that subject would most likely ensue; there would be also, I believe, great difficulty in collecting fees.

3. So far as I am aware, the working of the Education Act in this (Auckland) district is attended with as little expense as is possible, bearing in mind the fact that the Board has endeavoured to place education within the reach of almost every settler in our thinly-populated district. The large number of small and half-time schools established in remote places has no doubt been a very heavy drain upon the resources of the Board. The salaries of teachers and Inspectors are, I believe, lower than those paid for similar services in other parts of the colony.