

The freedom permitted to teachers by the present syllabus furnished one of the strongest recommendations in its favour. During the past year, however, experience has shown far too often how head teachers have failed to recognise that greater freedom necessarily implies greater responsibilities. Teachers leaving to accept other appointments have time after time failed to furnish for their successors necessary records setting forth the work undertaken for the year, and the portions accomplished prior to their departure. It cannot be too plainly affirmed that we hold such omissions to constitute most serious neglect of plain duty, and to indicate a callous disregard of interests which should have been a teacher's primary care.

In the statistical portions of this report the main features diverge but slightly from those observable in the report for the previous year. The average ages remain practically unaltered, but in calculating these a rising tendency was frequently noticed. The extent, however, was insufficient (except in the case of Standard IV) to make any perceptible difference in the final result. This year the number of children reaching the status of Standard I was slightly greater than in 1906, but we are still convinced that progress to this stage might well be accelerated. A further diminution has taken place in the number of pupils remaining to take up the work of Standard VII, but this does not necessarily imply that the demand for instruction at that stage has materially slackened. The increased attendance at the Girls' High School and the establishment of continuation classes at the Technical College are factors which probably account for the whole of the decline just noted.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.	
								Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	336	299	14	9
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	1,451	1,389	13	9
" V	...	...	...	...	...	1,929	1,826	13	0
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	2,317	2,197	12	2
" III	...	...	...	...	...	2,415	2,269	11	1
" II	...	...	...	...	...	2,284	2,144	10	1
" I	...	...	...	...	...	2,311	2,099	9	0
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	6,411	5,096	7	0
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	19,454	17,319	11	4*

* Mean of average age.

In the succeeding paragraphs we propose, in accordance with Regulation 12, to discuss as regards quantity and quality the work accomplished in the prescribed subjects of instruction.

READING.—There are but few schools in which the treatment of this subject fails to reach the plane of satisfactory efficiency, and in a goodly number it has strong claims to unqualified commendation. Naturally there are instances, more than a few, where expression might be improved and where those pleasing modulations which lend charm to the rendering of a cultured student are practically unknown; but, in only a few do the pupils of upper standards fail to read with satisfactory fluency and with very fair intelligence passages previously unseen. In the lower classes "sight" tests are not always negotiated so successfully. If, however, some allowance is made in consideration of the lack of prolonged practice this admission need not occasion acute distress.

In the more general establishment of school libraries and in every effort made to provide variety and abundance of reading-material we hail with pleasure the acceptance of a policy long advocated in annual reports on the schools of North Canterbury. But, "lest one good custom should corrupt the world" we would remind those most concerned to be on their guard against a tendency to scamper through volume after volume in a frantic and vain attempt to swell the list of books allegedly "read." The practice of reading with eyes and fingers only is none too rare, and more harm than good may arise from its pursuit. The reading habit was never so prevalent as it has now become, and, while conceding the truth of the maxim that in these days "the man who does not read is lost," we feel that the plight of the man who knows not how to read and what to read is no less perilous. Accepting the risk of wearisome repetition we again plead for variety of reading-matter. Granting that the demand for useful information and for knowledge bearing directly upon the practical pursuits of every-day life ought not to fall upon deaf ears, we yet remember that "man does not live by bread alone," and we feel that heart-culture is the basis of true culture. An essayist has said that there are two worlds, the world that we can measure with rule and line, and the world that we can feel with our hearts and imaginations. To be sensible of the truth of only one of these is to know truth but by halves.

In a considerable number of schools comprehension of the reading lesson and of the pieces selected for recitation is a disappointing feature. Where pupils fail in making at least an intelligent attempt to convey in their own words some interpretation of the thoughts embodied in the passages dealt with it is felt that the main object of these lessons has not been realised. The whole programme of instruction provides no better opportunities than these to bring the minds and tastes of teachers and taught into mutual play, and to promote the culture just referred to. As a side issue it is needless to say that the teaching of composition will be materially aided if pupils are brought to recognise and appreciate beauty of thought and the happy choice of words which enhances its charm.