

knowledge, ripe experience, and sound appreciation of teaching-aims acted as a stimulus to progress, and enabled him to introduce and successfully carry forward modifications and reforms demanded by changes in social and industrial conditions and in the intellectual outlook of our people. We realize and feel that our district owes much to Mr. Petrie, to his example, to his wide knowledge of educational requirements, to his untiring energy, and to his successful efforts in raising the standard of efficiency throughout our schools, and we trust that he may long continue to enjoy the well-earned rest with which his strenuous and useful life is now being crowned.

ORGANIZING INSPECTOR.—Acting on the suggestion of Mr. Plummer, the Board has made a new departure by appointing an Organizing Inspector, whose work will lie chiefly amongst the smaller schools, for which circumstances render it impossible to secure experienced teachers. The duration of the visits to these schools will obviously vary with local conditions and the special circumstances connected with each. In general, however, a visit will extend over several days, and may be prolonged to a fortnight or even more, so that the number of schools dealt with during the year must necessarily be small. The schools selected for these visits will be chosen not so much for their inefficiency, but because they appear to offer a reasonable prospect of improvement. To require the Organizing Inspector to visit schools whose teachers show but little likelihood of being able to acquire increased efficiency would obviously not be utilizing his services to the best advantage. During the last few years, owing to rapid spread of settlement and increased demand for schools, considerable difficulty has been found, notwithstanding the output of the Training College, in obtaining suitable teachers, and in quite a number of cases it has become necessary to employ those whose experience of teaching was practically nil. Amongst these, however, as also amongst our younger teachers in the country, is much promising material which only needs help and guidance to enable it to do commendable work. It is to the improvement of this type of teacher that our Organizing Inspector will devote himself, assisting in preparing schemes of instruction, in co-ordinating work generally, in drawing up teaching-notes, and offering guidance and direction as to aims and methods; and, more important still, it is hoped he will be successful in rousing enthusiasm for the work itself, and encouraging to further effort those whom force of circumstances has tended to dishearten or depress. It remains, of course, to be seen whether this is the best way to solve the problem of providing small, more or less isolated schools with suitable teachers. If it does not succeed, other means will have to be adopted, for, quite apart from the claims of backblock pioneers, and these are considerable, the State cannot afford to allow an important section of its young people to grow up without efficient training.

RURAL INSTRUCTION.—Realizing the importance of this phase of education in a land whose prosperity depends so largely on its agricultural and pastoral interests, we welcome the effort which is now being made to carry on in our district high schools instruction in elementary agriculture and in other subjects of manual training begun in the primary school. A considerable leakage takes place as pupils pass through the schools, and of those who reach Standard VI and obtain certificates of proficiency barely 40 per cent. continue their education further. All this is much to be regretted: so that any modification of curriculum likely to arrest the waste of the State's most precious raw material, her undeveloped children, should win the approbation and receive the hearty support of all interested in the true welfare and progress of the nation. We feel that one of the reasons why pupils do not remain longer at the primary school, and look forward to continuing their education at some higher school, is that, in the country at least, the kind of work undertaken by the higher school has but little direct bearing on the life and work immediately ahead, and, since pupils are unable to obtain the needed training in the school, they go to seek it in what appears to be the more attractive and profitable life outside. We hope before many months have passed to see a course of rural instruction in full operation in most of our district high schools, a course which, while providing for a training in such branches of elementary agriculture and handwork generally as are best adapted for a preparation for rural life, will not lose sight of the claims of other subjects, or the interests of pupils wishing to prepare for the public examinations. Such a course, we have hopes, will attract many who, under present conditions, drift away to work after obtaining a Standard VI certificate, and will have the effect of inducing some of those who now leave the primary school before reaching the upper classes to remain until they obtain a proficiency certificate, with the object of taking advantage of the training then open to them. Before closing this paragraph we should like to repeat what has been said so often before—viz., that the schools lay no claim to being able to turn out farmers; there will be much to learn beyond what the school can teach before the evolution of the farmer is complete; but what they do hope to accomplish is to direct the attention of young people towards rural pursuits, to bring home to them that work on the land is more efficient, more interesting, and more profitable, if directed by trained intelligence, and that the problems awaiting those who will eventually become farmers are sufficiently complex to tax the resources and ability of the brightest and most experienced.

AVERAGE AGE.—We would again call attention to the average age of pupils in Standard I, which we cannot help feeling could be materially reduced without in any way affecting the stability or the foundations of knowledge laid during the earlier stages of school life. This matter was dealt with by the Inspector-General of Schools in his report for the year 1909. He attributes the high average age in Standard VI principally to what he considers to be the unduly long time that pupils appear to be kept in the preparatory classes. He points out that during the last few years the average age of Standard I has risen by three months, and, moreover, that the interval between the average ages of the children in Standard I and Standard VI respectively has slightly fallen. The high average age of Standard VI therefore does not appear to him to be due to any change in the rapidity of promotion through the standard classes, but chiefly to the high age in Standard I, or, in other words, to the length of time that children are kept in the infant classes. We are of opinion that there is much justification for these remarks, and, moreover, that the age