

(g.) Nature-study : Improvement in the treatment of nature-study advances but slowly. It is not an easy subject to teach, and requires both enthusiasm and thoughtful preparation, but under the best conditions its value as a mental training is beyond question. Scientific method now plays so important a part in human affairs that teachers should in their lessons on nature-study make an earnest endeavour to stimulate the interests of their pupils and cultivate their powers of initiative.

*Teachers.*—Of the teachers of the district as a whole we cannot speak too highly. They are rendering loyal service, and are a credit to their profession. The war-conditions prevailing have caused throughout the community at large a spirit of unrest and nerve-tension, and this has reacted on the general atmosphere of the home and the school. Under these circumstances it is gratifying to find, therefore, that results show little loss of efficiency. In a number of our schools there has been considerable dislocation of the work owing to changes in the staffing arrangements rendered necessary by the enlistment of some of our brightest and most gifted young teachers. Among these we have to mourn the loss of several whose noble example must leave its impress on the pupils with whom in the past they have been associated. Indeed, the present war has given an opportunity of discovering the kind of men and women who have come through our schools, and hence the nature of the training received and its bearing upon the national character. We find on every side an excellent response to the claims of the various funds organized in connection with the war, and everywhere there is evidence of united effort to provide comforts for those at the front. These are indications of the splendid patriotism apparent among all classes; and our lads as they clung to the crags at Gallipoli have borne witness to virtues which are the outcome of the training in our schools.

And in conclusion we would ask teachers always to keep in mind that the work of the school should be a real preparation for the work of the world. We must teach our pupils to overcome difficulties by earnest self-reliant effort. We must do all in our power to strengthen the will, the energy, the power of initiative, the love of honest work. As Professor Huxley has said, "We may develop the intellectual side of people as far as we like, and we may confer on them all the skill that training and instruction can give, but if there is not underneath all that outside form and superficial polish the firm fibre of a healthy manhood and earnest desire to do well, our labour is absolutely in vain."

We have, &c.,

WM. BROCK,  
CHAS. D. HARDIE,  
S. C. OWEN,  
J. B. MAYNE, } Inspectors.

The Director of Education, Wellington.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 4th February, 1916.

We have the honour to submit our annual report on the schools of this district for the year 1915.

At the close of the year the number of schools in operation was eighty-five, Timaru Main and Timaru West being reckoned as one school, as the latter is still a side school under the control of the Timaru Main Committee. With the exception of the Kakahu Bush School, to which, on account of an outbreak of whooping-cough at the time arranged for a second visit, only one visit was paid, all the schools were inspected at least twice during the year. As in former years, the five Roman Catholic schools were also inspected and examined. In accordance with subsection (1) of section 133 of the Education Act the Senior Inspector examined the private secondary schools at Waihi (Winchester), and at Craighead and Strathmore (Timaru), the roll number at each of these schools being respectively thirty-seven, forty-six, and twenty-six. During November Mr. Valentine assisted Mr. Morton in the inspection of schools in the Westland and Grey Districts.

The following table shows the number of pupils on the roll of the public schools, the number present at the annual examination, and the average age of the pupils in each class :—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.	
								Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	164	162	15	1
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	432	424	13	11
" V	...	...	...	...	...	595	572	13	1
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	714	688	12	1
" III	...	...	...	...	...	779	755	11	1
" II	...	...	...	...	...	756	725	10	1
" I	...	...	...	...	...	752	722	9	0
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	2,250	2,148	6	11
Totals						6,442	6,196	9	11*

\* Mean of average age.

The figures in this table show for the year an increase of 112 in the roll numbers and of twenty-eight in the number present at the annual examination. The average age remains practically the same as last year, except that in Standard VII it has fallen from fifteen years five months to fifteen