

Montessori's methods, and of which Professor Armstrong and other eminent educationists in England were the vigorous supporters, so long will children, old and young, lack the ability and the self-reliance necessary to prosecute their studies by their own efforts.

The Proficiency Examination, which marks the termination of the primary-school life of a pupil, is invariably conducted by the Inspectors themselves. The percentage of passes varies a good deal in the different districts, but neither these results nor the results of the Junior National Scholarship Examination are to be taken as a reliable indication of the relative efficiency of the districts. The variation in the percentage of proficiency certificates awarded is no doubt due partly to natural fluctuations in passes and failures, "fat" years following "lean," and partly to some variation in the standard of appraisal. During the year an interesting investigation into the Inspectors' standards of judgment was made in the case of the marking of composition and writing. The results of this investigation were communicated to the Inspectors with the object of establishing a fairly uniform scale of judgment in each of the subjects mentioned.

The Inspectors' annual reports deal very largely with the quality of the instruction, and extracts bearing on this matter are submitted herewith. In three respects our scheme of primary education, generally sound though it undoubtedly is, does not march with the times. The method of imparting instruction by oral lessons delivered to the pupils in platoons (in some cases, one might almost say, in regiments) dominates the school system. A method of this kind is not calculated to develop the pupil's individuality or his power of initiative, since the "oral" lesson must progress according to the teacher's plan, and is essentially designed to meet the needs of the "average" pupil, if there be such a person. It is hoped the time is not far distant when some system of self-education will be evolved not only in the preparatory classes, where it is occasionally seen even now, but in the standard classes also. In the second place, our school-work is not closely enough associated with the child's environment. The fault found with English schools, that the instruction they give is too bookish in character, applies with equal force in New Zealand. The text-book dominates the teaching, and is indeed to many teachers of much greater importance than the syllabus itself. In an endeavour to induce teachers to make their teaching more practical one of the Education Boards was persuaded to provide sufficient apparatus to enable arithmetic and geography at least to be taught practically; but, notwithstanding all efforts, the text-book in most cases prevailed, and the apparatus was frequently found among the lumber. Probably the total banishment of some of the present text-books would be the only effective way to secure a better recognition of the child's environment as a factor in the teaching. Lastly, few of our primary schools give any attention to the importance of training school-children in social service. There are many opportunities for giving this training in school, and it is a pity, therefore, that the same general principle that underlies much of the organization of the Scout system and of the better forms of the prefect system does not find more general acceptance in the primary schools. In one district the introduction of the kind of training referred to has already been attended by excellent results, but in other parts of New Zealand it is in evidence only in isolated cases. The matter is referred to thus in the report from one district: "The instruction [referring here to general instruction] is mainly on highly satisfactory lines, although there are some who stress the informative rather than the educative side of their work. These are inclined to overlook the great responsibility of their position, and to forget that their great duty is to develop intelligence and to inculcate in the daily life of the scholars habits of social service as a preparation for their future responsibilities as citizens."

The following are additional extracts from Inspectors' annual reports (the different reports being indicated by the letters (a), (b), &c. :—

*Post-primary Education.*—(a.) "With the extension of the compulsory school age the work of district high schools must have greater opportunities of development. During recent years the majority have done excellent service for their districts. They provide for the boy and girl who can devote only a limited time to secondary subjects, a form of continuation work of a more elastic nature than that of the purely secondary school. Should there be a curtailment of the primary syllabus in order to reduce the age at which pupils may enter upon post-primary work, it seems that the district high school must be the means in many localities by which the new demands will be met."

(b.) "It will be seen that, in spite of the opinion that the work of the district high schools should be directed principally to training in rural-course subjects, there is a distinct tendency towards what may be called classical education. We found in one instance that boys who had taken the special rural course in science for three years omitted science from their choice of subjects for Matriculation Examination."

*Quality of Instruction.*—(a.) "Even in the standard classes we feel at times that the results to be obtained at the annual visit of the Inspector, rather than the educational welfare of the pupil, loom too prominently before the teacher when he is making his promotions."

(b.) "We have found, as noted above, a general tendency to follow text-books very closely, and a disinclination on the part of the teachers to read widely for themselves and to crystallize the information obtained in good oral lessons. In many cases we have found too much reliance being placed on notes dictated by the teachers. We hope that with the general adoption of the schemes now suggested these faults will largely disappear."

*Staff Conferences.*—(a.) "We are of opinion that some headmasters fail to realize the important bearing of staff conferences on the work of the school. The discussion of methods, schemes, and promotions encourages a harmonious development of the work. Conferences increase the interest of the individual members of the staff, encourage loyalty to the school, make for attention to detail, and secure continuity of method."

(b.) "In respect of improvements in organization, we note a distinct advance in one direction—viz., the frequent conferences between headmasters and assistants regarding promotions and other matters affecting the welfare of the pupils."