

eight years of age. A large number of our pupils enter school at so late an age that it is impossible that they could pass Standard I. before they are nine. This is not, in my opinion, a very serious matter, as the age at which Standard VI. is passed is already low enough for entering on the duties of a life's career.

The existing regulations for the inspection and examination of the public schools came into force at the beginning of 1900. Under them head teachers enjoy almost complete freedom in the classification and promotion of their pupils, but their arrangements in these respects are subject to the criticism and in extreme cases to the correction of the Inspectors. In very few cases has it been thought necessary for the Inspectors to determine passes and promotions, this course having been adopted mainly in schools taught by teachers not yet possessed of full certificates. On the whole, head teachers have shown themselves worthy of the trust now reposed in them, and have determined the passes and promotions in the classes below Standard VI. with a careful judgment and an honesty of purpose that promise well for the future. In some few country schools a proficiency in reading below what the regulations regard as indispensable for promotion has been accepted, and writing has here and there been too leniently judged, but in the overwhelming majority of cases the promotions granted have been fully deserved.

Throughout the year the Inspectors have encouraged head teachers to take account, as far as possible, of their periodical examinations in determining promotions. Every pupil should be made to understand that satisfactory progress during each quarter is necessary for passing on into a higher class. By laying stress on the need of steady progress, and its concomitant—regular attendance—head teachers should now be able to apply a constant and powerful stimulus to good attendance and steady application. With wise management this incentive may easily be made an important aid to progress.

The general improvement in the school work noted in last year's report has been maintained during the present year. The condition of the great majority of the public schools is at least satisfactory, and in something like half their number it is creditable. A good many of the larger schools are in a high state of efficiency.

An annual stock-taking discloses tendencies in the matter of progress rather than pronounced results, for the clear recognition of which a wider survey is necessary. Such a survey is, in a large measure, presented in Mr. Purdie's report to me, from which I make a few extracts. "On the whole," he says, "I was favourably impressed with the quality of the work done in the schools (of the northern district), and with the zeal of the teachers. Notwithstanding sundry grave disadvantages" (which Mr. Purdie enumerates) "a great majority of the schools were in a satisfactory condition. Indeed, in many directions considerable improvement has, in my opinion, taken place in recent years. Composition, spelling, reading, geography, science, and drawing seem to me to be both better taught and better learned than they were fifteen or sixteen years ago, when I was in charge of a small country school in the north. The teaching of the preparatory classes is incomparably better. On the other hand, arithmetic and grammar seem to me somewhat deteriorated; the deterioration is possibly more apparent than real, since it must be remembered that the average age at which pupils pass their standards has steadily decreased for some years past. In addition to the schools of the northern district, I examined most of the pass-subjects in the Auckland City schools this year. If a somewhat lengthy experience in two of these schools several years ago qualifies me to institute a comparison, I should say that they are very much improved in almost all directions, but particularly in discipline and in drill, and in the teaching of the preparatory classes." These impressions of Mr. Purdie's are well worthy of record, and his long and varied experience as a teacher lends no small weight to his opinions.

In last year's report I indicated certain specific causes that appeared to me to be retarding progress. The causes mentioned are not peculiar to the Auckland District, nor to New Zealand, but are perhaps equally active in more advanced countries, as every one who studies the evidence of specialists in the education of to-day is aware. The Inspectors have for years recognised their gravity, and have been endeavouring to combat them as far as lies in their power. The low ideal of education that was complained of can be best removed by teachers seeing and coming into intimate contact with a better type of teaching. For affording this experience we have at present few, indeed almost no facilities. The provision of a good model school of small size, to which inexperienced and backward teachers could resort for improvement and inspiration, would alone do much to remove this defect. In most directions the establishment of a training-college for young teachers should do more. Such an institution is one of our urgent needs, and its provision cannot be too forcibly urged on the notice of the Minister. For the cost of this institution should be met by the Education Department, and should not be a tax on the Board's income from capitation payments, which were designed to meet nothing more than the charge of salaries and current expenses of maintenance.

As regards methods of teaching, much may be learned from the study of the newer and fuller text-books on school method that are finding their way into the hands of all teachers who are anxious to march with the times. Such *vade mecum*s as Gladman's and Farnie's little works on school method may suffice to push a teacher through the E certificate examination, but they will give him little idea of the methods and aims of the most advanced and thoughtful teachers of our time. It is impossible that books planned on so small a scale could do so. The Departmental examinations in school method and management should do more to secure improvement in this direction than they now do. They lay far too much stress on time-tables, registration, and such mechanical arrangements. To have high aims in teaching, to adapt their methods to the attainment of these aims, and to have a good knowledge of the principles on which class-government reposes are the chief things we should demand of young teachers. Some practical experience of teaching will soon make them so familiar with the conditions of their sphere of work that the