

held during the previous November or December. This proved to be a simple matter with Standards I to V, in which the promotions are in the hands of the head teachers, but with regard to Standard VI the matter was somewhat complicated, as certificates of proficiency and competency in this standard are awarded on the results of an Inspector's examination, and the difficulty was for three Inspectors personally to conduct a practically simultaneous examination of some 1,300 Standard VI candidates distributed in the 161 schools in the district. The great bulk (nearly 75 per cent.) of these candidates, however, belong to the large city and suburban schools, and as it has been customary for us to examine these schools towards the close of each year, they naturally fell into line with the new regulations. Our chief difficulty was to meet the case of the schools examined in the beginning and in the middle of the year. Our method in dealing with these latter was as follows: At the time of the Inspector's annual visit special attention was given to the Standard VI candidates, and their work was carefully noted and scheduled; at the end of the following November fresh tests in English, arithmetic, and geography were forwarded from the Board office, and the papers worked under the supervision of the head teachers. The results of this examination were then compared with those of the Inspector's previous examination held earlier in the year, and certificates were awarded or withheld accordingly. In the case of those schools examined during the early part of the year, the granting of certificates was deferred until the Inspector's next visit. This plan, though not without its drawbacks, was thought preferable to any attempt at examining candidates in different centres.

For the benefit of teachers we here give a rough outline of the changes we purpose making in our itinerary for 1909.

1. With the exceptions noted below, the visit paid to a school during the earlier part of the year will be an inspection visit of which no previous notice will be given.

2. The second visit, of which the statutory ten days' notice will be given, and on which the annual report will be based, will, as a rule, be paid in the latter part of the year. This will be the visit more especially mentioned in the regulations as the "annual visit."

3. In the case of schools in the Pongaroa and Te Nui districts, and of a few other outlying schools, the arrangements of previous years will be adhered to, in view of the fact that, owing to the conditions of the roads in winter and the distances which the majority of the children have to travel, the best and most continuous work is done in these districts in the summer months. More especially will this be the case where Committees and teachers fall in with our suggestion of taking the long vacation in the winter.

SYLLABUS.—We think it only proper that our report should contain some expression of opinion on a matter that has already been referred to us for that purpose by the Board. The public-school syllabus has lately been subjected to a certain amount of adverse, not to say hostile, public criticism, much of which, in our opinion, is not only without justification, but is really due to misapprehension on the part of the critics themselves of the matter and method of the syllabus. A reference to our previous reports, and to portions even of this, will clearly show that we ourselves by no means consider the syllabus incapable of improvement. No one, indeed, pretends that it is perfect in every detail, but, as an effort to grapple with the complex educational problems of the day, and as an endeavour to keep our educational system abreast of modern ideals and requirements, it is unquestionably the ablest production that the Dominion has as yet proved itself capable of. Much of this so-called failure of the syllabus is due to faulty interpretation, and therein perhaps lies its apparent weakness. It may be remembered that on its first appearance we ventured the opinion that to a certain extent it was before its time—that its full force and value would not be appreciated, nor would justice be done to its real spirit and intention until there should be such improvement in the training of our teachers and in the staffing, accommodation, and general equipment of our schools as would enable the provisions of the syllabus to receive really competent administration. In other words,—

Its nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.

Nor in regard to administration do we think it necessary to restrict the application of the quotation to teachers alone. We speak, of course, entirely for ourselves.

Reverting to the adverse criticism mentioned above, the chief grievance would appear to be the absence from the syllabus of proper provision for the teaching of what, for a better term, may be called formal grammar. We are told that there is a general complaint from the secondary teachers that the "grammatical ignorance," as some one calls it, of the primary pupil is a serious obstacle to his progress in the secondary school. There are secondary teachers who go so far, indeed, as to say that it is impossible to teach the boy from the primary school Latin, owing to his ignorance of English grammar. We do not for one minute question the right of any one to be the best judge of his own limitations, but it cannot be said that the proficiency in languages (more especially in the mother-tongue) of the average youth from the secondary schools of the Dominion has at any time been of so conspicuous a nature as would, in our opinion, justify the subordination of the whole system of teaching English in the primary schools to the requirements of the particular methods obtaining in secondary schools. We can quite understand the boy from the primary school proving an unsatisfactory subject for the application of a method which we have heard aptly described as "the apotheosis of the Latin Grammar," but that is not to say that he would be equally a failure under a more rational and intelligent system of instruction. The syllabus very properly concerns itself with grammar, not as an aid to the analytical study of language, Latin or any other, nor as a "means of providing exercises in logic," but only so far as it may be considered an aid to the correct speaking and writing of English. The directions with regard to this are explicit enough—"technical grammatical terms are to be used very sparingly indeed, and no grammar is to be introduced into the course of public instruction except