

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS.

A further consideration of the significance of the human element shows the danger of deriving too much satisfaction from a study of percentages and of the outstanding successes of our educational work. It is, no doubt, gratifying to learn that a large proportion of children have reached a certain standard of education, or that a reasonable percentage has shown distinct ability, or to know that in certain areas or certain schools the work is of a high standard. Such gratification, however, should not blind us to the fact that with regard to a large number of children in the Dominion our work has been either a partial or an almost complete failure, and that though these children might form a small percentage of the whole, the significance of the failure of our system is, for them, just as serious as if it involved all. Specific cases of the kind of partial failure referred to would include the results of providing a uniform kind of instruction for children of widely varying temperaments and capacities where the pace and the ability of the majority govern the situation. During the past fifteen years considerable progress has been made towards more freedom and elasticity in this respect, but until classes are smaller, teachers more highly trained, and inspectorial guidance is more general and effective, there will still be a large number of children in New Zealand who not only fail to derive the benefit which their school course could otherwise give them, but who will, in too many cases, form an aversion to any form of educational improvement which might otherwise subsequently be opened to them.

EDUCATION IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS.

Again, our gratification at partial successes should not cause us to ignore the many and serious handicaps under which the education of children in country districts is at present labouring. This has been stressed before, but until some adequate remedy has been provided it must again be brought prominently under the notice of the public. A leading educationist in the United States recently stated that "Cities suffer less from the employment of untrained, uneducated, immature recruits than do the villages and country districts, which have to take the novices. Surely the intelligence of rural folk is as essential to the upbuilding, to the efficiency, and to the safety of democracy as is the intelligence of city folk. There must be as competent and well-trained teachers in the country as in the cities."

This question has special significance in New Zealand when we remember that nearly one-third of the children of the Dominion are taught in sole-teacher or two-teacher schools, in which nearly all the uncertificated teachers are employed. About one-fourth of the adult teachers in New Zealand are uncertificated, and to a large extent untrained. Almost without exception, to these teachers is given the responsibility of teaching children in the country, where, of all places, the very best educational facilities should be given in order to make up as far as possible for the many special disadvantages under which the country children labour in comparison with the children of the cities. It is hoped to make some improvement in these conditions by consolidating small schools, by establishing model schools for the training of inexperienced teachers, by appointing experienced organizing teachers to supervise groups of small schools, by a fairer distribution of uncertificated teachers among town and country schools, and by providing increased facilities for the training of teachers and better inducements to young people to enter the teaching profession.

EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY.

The general consideration under discussion should also make clear to us that, to a far greater extent than can be said of any other agency directed by the State, education has for its real goal not the expansion of trade, nor the growth of industry, but the attainment of a higher and ever advancing standard of human life. On this topic a leading educational journal remarks, "The American conception of democracy rests upon a more or less conscious assumption that the means of education must very largely take the place of those means of governmental control which are used with the uneducated in securing that union of personal support and national direction of activities which civilization requires. . . . It rests