

Madame Montessori and Miss Parkhurst are of the utmost interest and importance, marking as they do a distinct advance towards the ideal of educational effort. It would appear necessary, however, to warn both Inspectors and teachers of the danger of any hasty adoption of either method before first thoroughly understanding the underlying principles. While stagnation is to be abhorred, we must be careful that the swing of the pendulum does not carry us beyond the limits marked by reason and common-sense. The same is true of "free discipline" and "self-government in schools." More harm than good will be done to the cause of reform in school organization and management by the hasty adoption of methods but faintly understood. On the other hand, the teacher and the training-college student with "half-baked" ideas should not be met with ridicule and repression, but with encouragement and guidance, from both Inspectors and head teachers. The Inspectors' reports on the response of the teachers to the modern movement are interesting:—

*Auckland.*—"In many of the larger schools there is a growing sense of co-operation between teachers and pupils, and this appears to be likely to lead to more satisfactory results than methods of self-government, for the latter principle adopted by other than a teacher of strong personality and governing-powers results in lamentable weakness in the quality of the work and in a lack of industry and application on the part of the pupils. Where, however, the pupils are encouraged to overcome difficulties for themselves as much as possible, and to put forward their best efforts to reach the standard of work set by the teacher, whom they respect as one set above them in order to guide and direct them, instead of considering him as an equal, better progress is made, and the pupils are more likely to develop into good citizens with a properly founded respect for constituted authority."

*Wanganui.*—"There is no doubt that where some system of self-government is in effective operation the general school-work is carried out with greater smoothness, the matter of discipline is made easier, and by placing the responsibility of management of a large part of the routine of school-work on the pupils themselves the general working-tone of the school is very materially improved. During the coming year we hope to see a considerable extension of the principle of self-government.

"Auto-education has been specially developed and carried out at the two infant schools and the model country school in Wanganui. The liberty of the child is the guiding principle, discipline and self-education being the natural corollary. The children are treated as individuals, and class-teaching is reduced to a minimum. Every child progresses at a rate determined by his own ability. There is no check to the progress of the more intelligent, while overstrain in the case of the duller pupils is avoided. A spirit of industry and self-reliance pervades the whole of the work, originality and self-expression are encouraged and developed, while order and self-control are present in a very marked degree.

"In the Model School the principle of auto-education, elsewhere confined principally to the lower classes, has been adopted throughout the school. Here the work of the standard pupils is carried out by means of a modification of the Dalton plan. A close observation of the pupils of this school shows that in no case has the progress of the pupils been below normal, while the advance made by some of the quicker pupils has been remarkable."

*Taranaki.*—"It cannot be said that such methods are widely practised in our schools. In more than one school we feel that a spirit of repression prevails, in large measure because of the unwieldy classes, but also due to the inability of the teachers to apply and use for the good of the child and of the community those powers, those qualities of mind and of action, that are the Creator's best gifts to him."

*Nelson.*—"The old system of one annual promotion is still general, and in most of the large schools the assistant still continues to do most of the work himself instead of endeavouring to secure the co-operation of the pupils. His aim, for the most part, has been to give information rather than to teach the pupil how to acquire knowledge and how to use it, and he is turned out not with a desire to learn, but with a dislike for learning. In our recent conferences with the teachers we have stressed these points, and a change in this respect is hopefully anticipated."

*Hawke's Bay.*—"No school in this district has yet adopted a complete system of auto-education on the lines of the Dalton plan, and we should be very glad indeed if some enterprising teacher would make the experiment and show how far the plan can be adopted in the schools of New Zealand.

"During the year the question of self-government in schools was considered by the Board, and teachers were encouraged by circular to institute junior school committees. A number of these have been in existence for some time and are doing good work, although in a somewhat limited sphere, assisting in the supervision of the buildings and grounds, reinforcing the discipline, and helping to maintain and guard the tone of the school, besides managing the functions connected with the school activities. We had an opportunity of attending a meeting of one of these committees, and were much impressed by the fact that responsibility thrown on the boys had elicited unexpected powers and initiative. The business of the meeting was transacted as expeditiously and satisfactorily as it could have been if done by adults."

*Southland.*—"We have no sympathy with those who are unable to distinguish between freedom and license; but we note with satisfaction that there are evidences of a gradual, but none the less sure, change from the traditional imitative, machine-like discipline to an organization that is designed, in conjunction with creative discipline, to transform the child's self-regarding sentiment to a true sense of duty involving recognition of one's obligations to others.