

no attempt is made to show them the elements of the letters and their simpler forms. The proper manner of sitting at the desks, and the way in which the pencil or pen should be held, are not clearly pointed out. Generally they are supplied with short pieces of pencil, which it is impossible for them to hold properly, and they are told to copy certain letters or words from a card or blackboard. The slate writing of Standards I. and II. was in far too many instances thoroughly bad, scarcely two children writing alike in any school. In several schools I found children writing in copies who had not progressed far enough in use of the pencil to be able to handle a pen properly. If teachers were to suitably graduate their exercises, and never allow their pupils to do anything without first explaining how it should be done, there would soon be a marked improvement in the writing. Failure in writing is frequently attributable to the mistake which some teachers make of trying to give instruction in some other subject during the writing lesson. The copy books of even the highest classes cannot be too carefully supervised.

Arithmetic.—Of the three elementary subjects, this gives the worst results. The answering of far too many of those examined showed a want of thorough instruction, especially in ability to work out correctly easy miscellaneous questions. There is still too much time devoted to the working out of mechanical questions, which, as a means of developing the reasoning powers, are almost useless. The problems set for Standards III. and IV. were of a simple and practical character, yet in a large proportion of the schools they were not attempted at all. In several schools the children appeared to be unable to add and subtract mentally with readiness, but used their fingers or made strokes on their slates to assist them. Mental arithmetic was generally found to be neglected in such schools, and the pupils knew but little about their tables. Teachers should remember that mental arithmetic does not merely consist of the application of a few technical rules. I have found a class quite expert in finding the prices of exact numbers of dozens and scores, but not one in the class could tell the price of thirteen loaves of bread at 4½d. a loaf. Again, for example, I have found a class presented in Standard II. five-sixths of which would in all probability work out correctly the following sum in subtraction:—

$$\begin{array}{r} 47096352 \\ 28096789 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

But when given such a simple question as the following—"A man has 396 sheep, he sells 198 of them, how many sheep has he left?" hardly one-sixth of the class could find the answer. In setting sums for home work care should be taken that they are similar to those worked on the blackboard during the day.

Grammar.—There is no noticeable improvement in the results obtained in this subject, which is not so very difficult to teach, provided the teacher has a good knowledge of it. Many of the papers handed to me showed gross ignorance of the subject. For instance, it is not possible to pass a scholar who gives "is," a "noun," and "when," a "verb." Many teachers have yet to realise the fact that intelligent oral teaching in this subject is better than the mere rote learning of whole pages of text books. A considerable amount of attention is paid to the analysis of sentences in most schools, but very little to sentence-making; and yet the latter is a far more important acquirement than the former. Composition is certainly not a satisfactory subject at present; and this is, I think, due to want of method in dealing with it. Children are asked to write compositions before they have the slightest knowledge of how to form sentences. In this, as in many other subjects, too much is taken for granted.

Geography.—This subject, judging by the results, has only received a moderate amount of attention. The questions set were well within the requirements, and offered no special difficulties. Sufficient trouble has evidently not been taken to see that the lessons gone over have been really learned. Some teachers appear to think that a knowledge of geography can be acquired by committing to memory a number of unmeaning names, and then pointing them out on a map. A great deal of useless knowledge is taught, while much that is essential is neglected. Sufficient use is not made of the maps, diagrams, and globes with which nearly every school in the district is supplied.

History.—Except in a few schools the answering on this subject was very poor. As history is in future to be treated as a class subject, I do not see any necessity for remarking on the manner in which it has been taught during the past year.

Extra Subjects.—Sewing was taught in all the schools except five. In quite three-fifths of the schools the needlework was satisfactory, but it did not meet the requirements of the standard in the rest. Singing was practised in about half the schools examined. Drawing is now compulsory in the First Standard, and will necessarily receive more attention in the future. The drawing-books in several schools were very creditable, but in others they showed plain evidence of poor teaching and careless supervision. Object lessons are now professedly given in all schools, and in a few with considerable success. In the case of eleven schools the answering in science was very fair; but in the others taking this subject the meagre results proved that the time of the teachers would be better occupied in giving instruction in the elementary subjects.

The usual schedules are attached.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, North Canterbury.

W. L. EDGE, M.A., Inspector.

2.—MR. WOOD'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Education Office, Christchurch, 22nd March, 1886.

I have the honour to submit the following report for the portion of the year 1885 during which I was engaged in this education district:—

From the 13th of August, 1885, the date at which I entered upon my duties, to the third week of January, 1886, I was almost entirely occupied with the work of examination. The number of schools on my list was so large that it was impossible to get this work completed by the end of the year. I examined, unaided, fifty-five schools, and took part with Mr. Edge in the examination of