

the voice at every pause were some of the most frequent errors that should be guarded against in future. Also, to the treatment of the logical divisions of the sentence particular attention should be paid, for, as one of the southern Inspectors tersely puts it, the teacher, by enabling his pupils to appreciate the formation of phrases, has ready to hand a lever of vast power for teaching not merely reading, but also grammar, analysis, and composition. Again, no pains should be spared to secure from the very outset distinct articulation, purity of pronunciation, and a good style; and perhaps these would be oftener found if more time were spent by teachers themselves in acquiring the art of reading aloud. Expression and modulation varied very much, according to the individuality of the teachers. To the position of their pupils when reading some teachers should pay more attention. The reader should stand upright, with head erect, with book held well up, but not so high as to conceal the face, and with the right hand behind the back. Lazy attitudes tend to produce false work, and to the competent judge they at once betray false work. In the preparatory classes still more attention should be paid to word-building, and to thoroughly grounding the children in the long- and short-vowel sounds and in the functions of the consonants. The highest class should have mastered the "Queen Infant Reader" by the examination-day. Comprehension of the subject-matter (placed in a very subordinate position in the syllabus) was not good, as was brought to light not only by oral questions but also by written questions. In some schools it was quite impossible to get a full and intelligent answer in the pupil's own words to any question requiring the meaning of a phrase or clause. The children must have some ideas about what they read, but they require training and encouragement to enable them to express those ideas in sentences of their own making. Teachers should not rely much on the definitions and synonyms given at the end of the lessons, "many of which," to quote an Inspector of another colony, "are so obscure as to remind one of the definition of a net given by Johnson in the first editions of his dictionary. 'A net,' says the great lexicographer, 'is a reticulated substance with interstices at the point of intersection.'" The want of variety in the text-books, we consider, militates greatly against obtaining good reading. In a class the same book is thumbed over and over again, until the lesson cannot fail to lose interest, and, as both Inspectors and teachers are aware, they are often known by heart. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that few pupils acquire any love for reading. As a remedy to some extent, we think that the use of a supplementary series of reading-books should be insisted upon. Some of our teachers put their pupils through a play of Shakespeare, but in most cases the subject-matter had not been clearly explained. In Otago the Inspectors examine the reading in each standard in two books. School-libraries would help to excite an appetite for reading, which, after all, is the main business of a primary school. In the Colony of South Australia an attempt has been made by the Education Department to do this by issuing to the schools a small paper called "The Children's Hour," which contains stories and poems of an attractive nature. Access to interesting books must enlarge the knowledge of pupils, must extend their vocabulary, and must at the same time contribute to the improvement of their reading. Until reading is not associated with difficulty, pupils cannot be expected to keep it up after they leave school.

*Dictation and Spelling.*—Again, this year, these subjects were found from bad to poor in all classes above Standard II. For all standards taken together, the average percentage of passes—78·1—is low, and this notwithstanding the high percentage of passes in Standard I. and in Standard II. From 91·5 in Standard I. the percentage drops to 66·6 in Standard III., and to 59·8 in Standard IV., recovering somewhat in Standard V. (71·5) and in Standard VI. (83·6). The extraordinary fall in the percentage of passes in Standard III. and Standard IV. is no doubt partly due to the fact that teachers are inclined to trust too much to the spelling of selected words, to the neglect of dictation. It does not follow that because a child can spell the more difficult words in a book he can write correctly a piece of dictation selected from the same book. We found that in the dictation exercises many of the errors occurred in the smaller words, and even in those words which pupils daily use. Such an experience clearly shows that dictation did not receive due attention throughout the year, but rather was left to the last moment, or was not taken at all. And, unfortunately, bad spelling in a school shows itself in other subjects besides dictation. Pupils were required to write letters or essays on familiar subjects, but these were sometimes almost valueless on account of the number of words incorrectly spelled. Also, the papers in physical geography, history, &c., were frequently marred by the same fault. It was often noticed that pupils could spell orally single words which they had misspelled in dictation or composition. This may have been due to inattention or carelessness on the part of the pupils, but we are afraid that too often it was the outcome of slovenly correction of the ordinary exercises on the part of the teacher. And we are led to this conclusion from the following: In order that teachers might find out the weak points in the work of their pupils they themselves were generally asked to correct the papers, we, of course, going through them afterwards and assigning marks. We regret to have to say that those papers were, as a rule, very poorly marked, and that thorough correction was the exception rather than the rule. Now, such slipshod correction must exercise a very baneful effect upon the children and their work, for a wrong impression once formed and passed over without correction is rendered much more difficult to remove. As the eye rather than the ear is the means by which new words are acquired and incorrect spelling detected, the importance of frequent practice in writing words is evident. The intimate connection between good reading and good spelling and dictation also should be noted. In schools where the enunciation is good and the pronunciation correct the dictation is generally satisfactory, for, while during the reading-lesson the attention of the pupils is directed to an unfamiliar word, a correct impression of such word is stamped indelibly on the visual memory. Year after year the attention of teachers has been drawn to the weakness in spelling and dictation in this district, but as yet without bringing about any decided improvement. It should be remembered that, although good spelling is not esteemed an accomplishment, bad spelling is looked upon as a very serious defect.

*Writing*, although showing a falling-off in the percentages of passes in all standards, generally