

with the greatest fluency and an exaggerated emphasis and modulation were helpless when brought face to face with a new lesson, even when that lesson was much simpler in character than those they had been so glibly reading, or, we might rather say, repeating, for with books shut they would proceed as readily as with them open.

We seldom have to complain of the want of preparation of spelling as tested in the formal spelling and dictation exercises. If this is had it may be taken as an indication of indifference or laziness on the part of the teachers. Simple words of every-day use are frequently misspelt in composition and grammar exercises. It would not be too much to expect all the teachers to do what many of them now do to prevent the recurrence of these mistakes—namely, to keep a notebook in which to enter mistakes that are general, and to use the lists so formed as the ground for special spelling-lessons. It would save much trouble with regard to one group of words if every boy and girl would remember the following little rule:—

The form with *double e* should go
Together with *suc, ex, and pro*;
But do not spell *procedure* so.

Some of our schools have earned a reputation for good writing, and as a general rule we are able to give credit to the teachers for the attention paid to this subject. Legibility and a pleasing degree of neatness are seldom wanting in the writing of a school, even where there is room for criticism as to the correctness of the form of the letters when closely compared with the copies set for reproduction, and to the sit-as-you-please attitude of the writers. Writing is not an exercise that may be left to take care of itself. Systematic teaching and close supervision are always well repaid.

Both in the methods adopted by the teachers in their treatment of composition and in the attainments of the children improvement is shown. If teachers would realise how much can be done in the lower classes in the right treatment of oral answering as an aid to the formal lessons in composition, there would be less neglect of this means of preparing their pupils for what, to most of them, is the most difficult subject of the school course.

In arithmetic we have not been able to detect any signs that denote a marked difference of attainment in the work of the standard classes from that of past years. During our visits we very frequently found pupils failing to satisfy the requirements of their standard about whose attainments in this subject the teachers had apparently entertained no doubt, and we fear there is a general tendency among teachers to overestimate the proficiency of their scholars in arithmetic. Still, we have good grounds for looking forward to improvement in the higher classes, because of the undoubted advance that has been made in the training of the lower classes in quickness and accuracy in dealing with numbers.

Among the class-subjects geography receives much the same treatment as when it was a pass-subject; freehand drawing shows some degree of improvement on the lines recommended in our last report; grammar is good in only a few schools; history receives a fair share of attention; science and object-lessons, though not taught with much success in the majority of our schools, have a really educative value as treated by an increasing number of our teachers; and recitation, while not generally displaying on the part of the pupils any high degree of elocutionary skill, is carefully prepared, and the pieces professed are repeated in a pleasant and fairly expressive manner. A summary of the degree of proficiency shown in class-subjects is as follows: Good in twenty schools, satisfactory in twenty-eight, fair in eighteen, and moderate in two. As the corresponding numbers last year were nine, forty, sixteen, and two, it will be seen that the results this year show a gratifying improvement.

The additional subjects include singing, needlework, and drill. We regret to report that from various causes singing is not taught in twenty-one schools. In all our large schools and in some of our smaller ones singing is well taught, and it is a pleasure to listen to the part-singing of the upper classes. Needlework, which is omitted from the school course in six schools, is generally very well taught. In only one school, and that the smallest but one in the district, was there no attempt to teach drill and exercises. The competitions so successfully carried out at the great gathering of school-children at the sports of the South Canterbury Schools Athletic Association have been the means of arousing a keen interest in military drill and physical exercises with wands, clubs, and dumb-bells, and both in large and in small schools some excellent work has been done. A summary of results in additional subjects is as follows: Excellent in one school, good in eighteen, satisfactory in thirty-nine, fair in six, and moderate in four.

So far the introduction of handwork in our schools has not been general; indeed, until a revision of the present standard syllabus has been made we do not think it would be wise to do much more than has been done. As it is, various kindergarten occupations have been taken up for the first time by the infant classes and Standard I. in some schools; and in the Timaru Main School and one or two others that have been doing good work in this direction for years past the instruction continues to be given with success. We are pleased to report that the teachers have been doing something to prepare themselves for taking up the work of instruction required for school classes under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act. During the last term of the year classes for the instruction of teachers were held in Timaru on Friday evenings and on Saturdays. The woodwork class for men was attended by forty-two teachers. The course extended to twelve lessons of two hours each, and the average number of hours attended was nineteen out of twenty-four. A class for instruction in kindergarten occupations, which included paper-folding, brick-laying, modelling in carbon, mat-weaving, and cane-weaving, was conducted by Miss Avison, and was attended by eighty female teachers, the course being one of twelve lessons of one hour each, the average number of hours attended being almost ten. A course of twelve lessons of one hour each in brushwork and modelling in plasticine was given by Mr. William Greene. This was for teachers of both sexes, and was attended by 126 teachers. The class was so large that it was