

ing after undue formality, we wish the practice were more general; but there is a good deal more that may be done. The children may, for instance, be required frequently to give oral accounts of something they have read or seen or learnt about in class, or where a story is read or told for purposes of reproduction an oral attempt, subject to class criticism and discussion, may well precede the written effort.

The influence of a sound training in grammar, treated with a view to its bearing on composition, is apt nowadays to be overlooked amid all the discussion on manual subjects, and we wish to emphasize its importance. Good grammar, it should hardly be necessary to say, can never produce good composition, but composition can scarcely be taught without a knowledge of grammar; it is composition's faithful handmaid, and as such should take its proper place among the subjects required for a Sixth Standard certificate. Geography might well give way to it. We should then have something like the Merit Certificate of the Scotch Code, which, we are informed, is becoming increasingly popular among Scotch pupils as the seal of their primary education and the token of admission to classes of the advanced stage. One obvious advantage of increasing value would be that pupils wishing to continue their education at a high school would have a better chance of starting another language on fair terms when they had already secured some acquaintance with the structure of their own. Geography itself would benefit by the change—in the encouragement of improved methods, in the introduction of a better type of matter and the increased possibilities of varied development, and (no small gain) in the partial or complete abolition of that "abomination," the petty text-book, with its snippets of information, which is now the well-nigh universal instrument of geographical teaching.

*Handwork.*—The progress made in handwork during the year is chiefly confined to the lower classes, the upper departments in general awaiting the issue of a revised syllabus and the adoption of some definite scheme of organization before venturing on a new departure. From our reports we find that clay-modelling is practised in thirty-nine schools or departments, brush drawing in forty-three, paper-folding in fifty-six, and other exercises of the ordinary kindergarten type—stick-laying, mat-weaving, peaswork, &c.—in fifty-nine. A few exceptional forms of occupation in basket-weaving and wire-work are also included.

The interest taken by the lady teachers in qualifying themselves to give instruction in occupations of the kind is beyond all praise. Large numbers of them have throughout the year given up their Saturdays to the work of preparation. Some hundred and fifty teachers are to be found attending brush drawing or other classes at the School of Art; Saturday classes in exercises of various forms have been in regular operation at the Normal School under the instruction of the head infant mistress; and similar classes, conducted in Ashburton by the infant mistress of the West Christchurch School and the mistress of the Ashburton Borough School, have entailed on the teachers even greater sacrifices, some coming regularly distances of fifteen and twenty miles to attend them. In the last two cases we have had an opportunity of inspecting the work done by way of examination at the close of the course, and could not but be greatly struck with the remarkable advance shown in a majority of the specimens. In the middle division of the schools a few examples of cardboard-modelling and, in the upper division, of chip-carving are the chief representatives of handwork as taught by teachers in school time. To these is to be added, however, the vastly more important work done in several centres in woodwork and cooking under the direction of specially qualified instructors. Ashburton as a woodwork centre has proved notably successful, owing largely to the interest taken by the neighbouring head masters in the work, and their ready co-operation in seeing to the execution of the necessary drawings and otherwise assisting. In Christchurch the cooking classes at the School of Domestic Instruction, which continue to be attended by large numbers from the city and suburban schools, excite most enthusiasm, and are evidently serving a very useful purpose. Many lady teachers are now qualified by attendance at cooking classes to act as assistant instructors, and when the special organization for this type of work is finally settled their services should prove very valuable.

As to the manner in which the requirements of the Act dealing with the question of physical drill in public and Native schools have been carried out in this district, we have the honour to lay before the Board the following statement:—

In nearly all the schools the subject of drill in some form or other receives due recognition, our reports showing that it is omitted only in some seventeen instances throughout the district, the omission being confined in the main to small aided schools, or to schools in sole charge of a mistress. Personally, it is to us a source of much gratification to note the efficient manner in which, in all the larger schools, the subjects both of physical and military drill are at present being treated. The instruction is given mainly by junior certificated members of the teaching staff who have themselves been trained by those officers of the Defence Department whose services were for some time freely placed at the Board's disposal, and whose hearty efforts have done much to create a healthy interest in the subject. The knowledge and experience possessed by a considerable number of the Board's teachers who are attached to various Volunteer corps have also been important factors in establishing all forms of drill on the present footing of unquestionable efficiency.

Apart from the question of military drill, we note that physical exercises based on the programme drawn up by the North Canterbury Public Schools Athletic Association have been taken up with much enthusiasm and with splendid success. The effective displays made by the girls of various schools have done much to awaken an interest in this form of training even in the most remote corners of the district, where, at our annual visits, we find wand or other exercises constituting a pleasing and a beneficial feature of the school routine.

We beg to state that in omitting to "make orders for fixing the times which shall be appointed and set apart for instructing boys and girls in physical drill" the Board has, in our opinion, exercised a wise forbearance, leaving the subject to be provided for as the circumstances of each school may best permit, and tacitly accepting its omission where for a time some special obstacle