

there is uniformly a want of diligence and discipline that causes a great reduction in value of the instruction given. In contrast to these, other small schools have been very successful, notably one in South Westland attended by Native children.

As the new syllabus of instruction is still under discussion and has not yet reached its final form, I refrain from a general opinion on the value of the innovations it presents. There is no doubt, however, that in two important directions the changes will be permanent. These are, (1) the reduction in the amount of arithmetic and the insistence, in its instruction, on modern and practical methods; and (2) the increased attention to the intelligent teaching of language and to its intimate connection with the methods of instruction in all branches. The lightening of the burden in arithmetic will enable the teachers to devote more time to oral composition, not only as a separate object of study, but also in connection with instruction and recapitulation in other subjects. Many of the teachers have already recognised the value of good methods of oral answering, and others will follow their example now that an improved opportunity is afforded to establish the instruction on a good basis.

It is generally agreed that the method of teaching English has in the past been excessively analytical, and a great deal has been included in the study of inflections, analysis, and parsing that is of little utility in training the pupils in speech and written composition. True as this is, the rules upon which accuracy of expression is based are, of course, to be learned, and the understanding of these, again, depends on acquaintance with a certain amount of what is sometimes termed "formal grammar." While it is not necessary that the instruction should be mechanical or "formal," there is an irreducible minimum of this technical knowledge that must form part of the course, and its value is such that its inclusion with the compulsory subjects of the revised syllabus was imperative.

With reference to training in oral composition, it is necessary to warn teachers against the pedantry of the uniform insistence on answers in complete sentences. This form may or may not be suitable, according to the nature of the questions. What is important is that the pupil shall have abundant practice in speech in complete statements. The pupils should be required to describe, explain, infer—all in the sentence form, but the direction or question of the teacher should be such as to require such a response. The pupils should be trained that they shall "not only sit down and write a logical and connected narrative without effort, but stand up, and, standing up, think aloud." For this purpose they should be required, in the recapitulation of parts or the whole of the lessons in other subjects, to recount what they have learnt, and in doing so to use statements showing completeness and continuity of thought.

Instruction in oral composition must be based very largely on the experience of the pupils. The syllabus in object lessons and geography, as well as the subjects of both written and oral composition, should be selected, at least partly, from the material supplied by their environment. The mountains, lakes, rivers, trees, birds of their own districts should be studied, and a description of processes of local industries and of events of their own community should form a prominent feature in their exercises. When facility and accuracy of expression have thus been attained the pupils are ready for excursions in a wider field, and if during the primary course they can be led to possess inquiring minds and good habits of observation they are more likely to maintain later an interest in nature-study than if a smattering of science is prepared from text-books for exhibition at annual examinations. Teachers are therefore required to include, as widely as possible, lessons on objects presented to the classes, or of matters that have come under the direct observation of the children. These remarks are not so applicable to defects in the larger schools of the district as to those existing in the smaller schools, where most of the teachers are untrained, and where it is continually necessary to insist on the selection of studies with a view to supply the pupils with training as well as with information.

Four of the Catholic schools of the district were examined. There were 173 pupils on the roll, of whom 162 were present at the time of my visit. Of these seventy-six passed the several standards. One of the larger of the five schools was not examined, as it was closed at the appointed time owing to an epidemic of sickness.

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A. J. MORTON, Inspector.

The Chairman, Westland Education Board.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 28th January, 1904.

We have the honour to present our annual report as Inspectors of the district for the year 1903.

During the year the duties of inspection and examination have been carried out in the usual way in accordance with the regulations, these and other customary engagements fully occupying the time at our disposal. For the seven months May to December, Mr. Thomas Hughes, B.A., headmaster of the Waltham School, acted as Inspector, temporarily taking the place of Dr. Anderson, to whom leave of absence had been granted by the Board to enable him to pay a long-delayed visit to the Mother-country. To Mr. Hughes's lot thus fell a full share of the more arduous part of our duties, and to him our best thanks are due for his zealous, loyal, and efficient co-operation.

The number of schools in the district at the end of the year was 206. Of these 204 were fully examined in due course, the remaining two—small aided schools in secluded neighbourhoods opened or reopened during the year—coming into operation too late for the purpose.

The examination lists presented on the dates of examination contained the names of 19,607 children, as against 19,749 for the year 1902, and 19,842 for 1901. Of this total 17,761 were