

are in any sense negligent in the treatment of composition. They may not always follow the best methods, but the majority of them work hard on the lines of treatment they have laid down, with results that in many cases are worthy of commendation.

Arithmetic is on the whole well taught. Last year 73 per cent. of those examined in Standard VI passed the test in arithmetic qualifying for certificates of proficiency; this year the percentage is 82. There is still room for improvement in the setting-out of the working of problems. No solution of a problem should be accepted by a teacher unless the pupil exhibits the steps of all the processes so clearly that an examiner can follow the reasoning with ease. The pupil would also be saved from many a glaring blunder in his answers if he were trained to ask himself at the end whether his solution is reasonable or not. The teacher must always bear in mind that it is his business not only to give the pupil skill in computation, but also to strengthen the powers of his mind.

With reference to the geography of Course A—physical and mathematical geography—it is satisfactory to record that good work on right lines has been done in many schools, and this is especially the case with regard to the physical geography. The children in this district are fortunate in their climate and surroundings. With less than an hour's walking from their school-doors, the children of five-sixths of our schools can view the sea; in all the schools they need go little beyond their own playgrounds for observation-lessons on mountain-ranges, with peaks rising above the snow-line, on hills and valleys, on rivers and plains. Many a lesson in geography I have given in the playgrounds; there was no need of the makeshift sand-tray. The use of geographical readers has been found inadequate as a means of supplying a working knowledge of commercial and political geography; and in consequence of this some of our most experienced teachers are drawing up their programmes to suit the requirements of geography as an additional subject, as set out in clause 43.

The reading of history has been taken in alternate years with the reading of the geography of Course B. The lessons are read and explained, and questions on the subject-matter are asked, thus satisfying the requirements. Some of the pupils are no doubt greatly interested in what they read, but it is a question whether many of them remember much of it afterwards, and whether they can place the events within a century or two of their time of happening.

The different kinds of drawing generally receive a due share of attention, with results that vary from moderate to very good. Some of the pupils who sat for certificates of proficiency lost heavily in this subject through failure to show that, in addition to the ordinary freehand drawing, they had done sufficient work for the year in either freehand drawing from simple models, or elementary solid geometry.

In nature-study and elementary science a great deal of splendid work is done, and the enthusiasm of many of the teachers for this work is deserving of the highest praise. In fourteen schools elementary agriculture has been taken as one of the subjects for which grants are earned under the Manual and Technical Instruction Acts. School gardens for experimental work are increasing in number, and the competition for the Hurdley Shield was keener than ever. The shield is held for the year by the school that gains most points for its exhibit at the Timaru Horticultural Society's Show, the judges taking into account the value of the exhibit from an educational standpoint. The competing gardens are visited by a professional gardener, whose report on the state of the gardens at the time of his visit is taken into account in awarding the prize. At the Saturday classes for teachers this year, Dr. Hilgendorf, of the Lincoln Agricultural College, gave a course of twelve lessons on elementary agriculture suitable for the instruction of children attending the primary schools. The attendance was excellent, and the keenest interest was taken in Dr. Hilgendorf's masterly handling of his subject. The course of lessons has been published in a pamphlet, and Dr. Hilgendorf's reputation as a teacher is a guarantee of its value.

In the larger schools the forms of handwork taken in the infant classes and Standards I and II are modelling in plasticine, stick-laying, brick-laying, and paper-folding. In Standards III and IV modelling in plasticine is continued, with modelling in carton or in cardboard, and designing with coloured paper. In fifteen schools the boys of Standards V and VI are making very good progress in isometric drawing and woodwork under their instructor, Mr. Chaplin; while the girls at the same stage enjoy the privilege of a splendid training in cookery from Miss Wilson and Miss Rennie, both teachers of exceptional merit. In many of the smaller schools various forms of handwork find a place in the programmes of work for the lower classes. The girls of all schools are instructed in needlework, the estimate of the work done generally ranging from good to excellent.

All the pupils have breathing exercises and physical drill for short periods every school day, and the cadet corps continue to uphold the name they have made for themselves in military drill and marksmanship.

In all but a few schools singing finds a place in the time-table. School singing is not always as sweet and tuneful as it might be, but it is not all deserving of the hard things that have been said of it. We have banners for football and cricket, challenge shields for swimming, shooting, and gardening, and the competition for these has fostered in the schools a spirit of emulation and friendly rivalry that has brought about improvement. The schools wait the gift of a banner or a shield for singing.

The secondary departments of the district high schools were inspected by Mr. Gill, whose reports were of a most favourable character. His estimate of their efficiency was fully borne out by the great success of the scholars who sat as candidates in public examinations, including the University Examination for Matriculation and Solicitors' General Knowledge, the Civil Service Junior Examination, the examination for Education Board senior scholarships, and the Department's examination for teachers' certificates of Class D.

From an analysis of the quarterly returns I find that the number of times the schools have been open for instruction ranges from 310 to 439. Now, after making the very liberal allowance of eleven weeks in the year for holidays, there would remain 410 half-days for schoolwork. In twenty schools the number of times open ranges from 410 to 439, and in a dozen schools the number is less than 80;