

have some knowledge of, and apply the principles of, voice training and elocution in teaching this subject, with a view to conserving his own and his pupils' health as well as to cultivating in his school the double sense of harmony and proportion. One of the chief purposes of teaching reading is to cultivate on the part of the pupil a love of good literature, and how much better could this be done if the pupils' ears were tuned to the music of English prose and verse. In our last report we spoke in emphatic terms of the method of teaching handwriting. During the year there has been some little improvement in both the teaching and in the results, but it is a rare thing indeed to see an interesting lesson in writing given. Teachers should endeavour to interest the pupils in penmanship as a mechanical art, and to secure each day a modicum of improvement in legibility, uniformity, and expedition. With respect to the complement of reading and writing—viz., composition—whatever may be said of the reintroduction of formal grammar into our primary-school curriculum, it is beyond the sphere of doubt that composition, the expression of thought in writing, has thriven in its absence. The improvement is, we should think, due partly to the pupils' not being consciously shackled by express rules while writing and partly to their better knowledge of nature and natural phenomena.

ARITHMETIC.—Under recent conditions this subject may have become more intelligent, but at the same time it has certainly become less accurate. Short methods, quick mental reckoning, rapid calculation of business accounts are largely lost sight of; nor will there be any decided improvement till the results of the intelligent work done by the lower classes are clinched to faithful and ready memories.

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY.—Of late years these subjects have not been taking the place in the education of our pupils which their importance warrants. The revised syllabus will doubtless so far redress the balance of studies as to reassure the public with respect to these important studies.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY, NATURE-STUDY, SCIENCE OF AGRICULTURE AND DAIRYING, PHYSICAL MEASUREMENTS.—Satisfactory progress is being made in these branches of school-work. It is certain that the pupils of our country schools are being well equipped for secondary training in agriculture; and it is to the Department's credit that in the provision of a secondary course in rural instruction at district high schools it has anticipated the needs of the farming community. It is to be hoped that all our district high schools will make the establishment of this course a matter of the first consideration.

HANDWORK.—This is the collective name for the studies embraced under drawing, woodwork, cookery, and modelling. It is in this group of subjects that the pupils express themselves visually and tangibly. All modern authorities are agreed that they form a necessary part of education. The least satisfactory of the group in respect of quality is drawing, which at many schools is very indifferently taught. The teacher who aims at mastery in this subject, even if he is not skilful, is an immeasurably better primary-school teacher than he for whom the subject lacks interest.

PHYSICAL TRAINING.—There is the greatest possible disparity in the quality of the physical training given in the schools. In several it is excellent; in a great many, especially in country districts, it is almost valueless. Now that the teachers have Davey's book in their hands, some uniformity and some amount of success may be looked for in all schools.

WORK AND PROGRESS RECORDS.—A certain amount of clerical work in every school is, under present conditions, unavoidable. It is not surprising that such work has sorely tried some teachers, and one sometimes fears that in some schools the letter may prevail over the spirit. But the great majority of teachers are acting wisely, making neat, accurate, and complete records, which become faithful auxiliaries of intelligent teaching.

DOMESTIC TRAINING.—The Board's special certificate for proficiency in the home arts was awarded to 132 pupils, ninety-six being of the first class and thirty-six of the second class. The cookery and needlework were examined by committees of ladies, while the health section was made the subject of a class examination by the Inspectors. It is worthy of note that at two schools the Standard VI girls were taken through a course of hygiene by medical men. The girls of the highest class at the larger schools may well be complimented on their success in this most important branch of education.

EDUCATION BOARD'S LIBRARY.—The library which was established by the Board in 1908 now contains some 250 volumes, dealing chiefly with the science and art of teaching. Many of the books have been chosen with a view to make teachers acquainted with the most modern methods of teaching the various subjects of instruction, particularly geography, handwork, and nature-study. Others deal with education on much broader lines, and others again are text-books useful to the Board's special instructors. In September, 1908, an arrangement was made by which teachers could have books sent them on condition the return postage was paid. During the past year ninety-one teachers took advantage of this privilege, and 290 books were issued. The books asked for were principally of two kinds—books useful to teachers preparing for advanced certificate examinations, and books dealing with the teaching of special subjects. Of the latter, books treating of geography have been of unquestionable service, the noticeable improvement in this subject in the district being due in some measure to the help teachers have gained from the library. It may also be mentioned here that there are in circulation in the district four boxes of books and four boxes of stereoscopic views, all of which are proving of service both to the teachers and to the pupils.

THE TEACHERS.—We desire to commend heartily the work done by the great majority of the teachers. In season and out of season they performed their manifold duties punctually, regularly, and faithfully. At our visits we found that most of them were anxious to gain information regarding the practical side of their work, and that many were preparing eagerly for their certificate examination. When the sum total of the early history of our country comes to be written the part played by the teacher in its development will not occupy the least conspicuous place.

We are, &c.,

GEO. D. BRAIK,
JAS. MILNE,
T. B. STRONG.

The Chairman, Education Board, Wanganui.