

devote some attention to the teaching of punctuation, which, inasmuch as it demands an intelligent comprehension of the subject-matter, forms an important factor in the teaching of English. As regards the spelling itself, we consider that steady improvement continues to be made.

*Writing.*—In comparatively few schools can the writing be regarded as excellent, and it seldom attains to a higher degree of efficiency than is indicated by the mark “satisfactory.” The children in the Preparatory classes still write much better, relatively speaking, than those of the upper classes, where the teaching is probably less careful, and the work is not so thoroughly supervised. It is not sufficient that the teacher should merely give out copybooks and instruct the children to go on writing while he takes another class, leaving the writing to teach itself. The copybooks are intended to be used only during the time that the writing is being actually taught. Moreover, as we have remarked in former reports, the benefits of the teaching are often undone by allowing children to write carelessly when doing other written work. The pupils should be expected to write with care, and to follow the style that is set in the copybooks from which they are taught. Further, we should like to see more attention paid to the position in which the children sit to do their writing. We have again and again had instances brought before our notice where the way in which the pupil sits to write has precluded all hope of expecting good writing from him.

*English.*—In this subject the improvement is less pronounced, and we feel that even yet the extreme importance of the subject is not fully appreciated by many of our teachers. We do not find that the subject is neglected, but we are inclined to think that there are not enough definite lessons given, and that consequently there is insufficient practice in both oral and written composition. We hope that in drawing up their schemes of work teachers will give the fullest consideration to the claims of English. Already we note a marked improvement in the work of the children in schools where teachers have done so, and we find that the extra practice in writing English required by the new syllabus has had a marked effect.

In the highest standards written compositions are generally too short, a defect which can be readily overcome by teachers setting essays on similar subjects, aiding the children at first by skeleton schemes embracing all the topics to be included in the essay. Further attention should be given to instruction in the correct methods of commencing and terminating various forms of letters. At least one letter should be written quickly, as an exercise in either composition or transcription. The exercise-books supplied will serve for this purpose.

The value of correlating the reading and recitation with the English composition should be apparent to all teachers, and it is gratifying to find that even in the lowest classes in some of the schools the children are thus acquiring the power to draw upon their reading-lessons and poetry for ideas from which to express their thoughts.

*Arithmetic.*—In the majority of our schools we find that the Preparatory classes are well taught. Indeed, in several cases, a very high degree of proficiency has been attained, and the pupils are able to work oral examples correctly with surprising rapidity. In the schools where less satisfactory results are obtained it seems that teachers do not fully comprehend the principles involved in the teaching of *number*, which they confuse with signs or *figures*. There is too much anxiety to get the children to use figures and to work sums before they are made familiar with the fundamental ideas and elementary processes. In a few schools the rate of progress in the lower infant classes is surprisingly slow, and causes us to doubt whether the teaching has been as vigorous and constant as it should be. It is not too much to expect that a child shall in a year be made familiar with the composition of the first ten or twelve numbers, yet we have found several instances where barely half this amount of work has been covered. In the higher classes the work is fairly satisfactory, the weakest standard being generally Standard V. In these classes the arithmetic suffers from the same cause as the English subjects—*i.e.*, there is not enough oral work. In all cases new rules should be taught from easy oral examples capable of mental solution, and not from the mere statement of rule by the teacher. The arrangement of the work leaves much to be desired, and marks have frequently to be deducted for want of system or method. The holding of periodical examinations as required by the regulations, and the additional practice in setting out the work involved therein, should go far to make some improvement in this respect. It is necessary to discourage teachers from using examination test-cards in place of the ordinary class-books in arithmetic. These test-cards are intended only for examination purposes, and the arithmetic of the standard cannot be taught by using them exclusively.

There is still evident in many schools the need for making the children appreciate the reality of the facts which they learn in the various tables. The use of actual weights and measures is a *sine qua non* of successful teaching in this particular part of the arithmetic, and, as we have before pointed out, it is not a difficult matter for the teacher to provide simple apparatus for the purpose. Children in the upper classes have been known to estimate the weight of a large school-book as 1 oz. or 1 stone, and to judge the height of the school-table as many feet. Some practice in estimating the weight or length of various objects, followed by verification on the part of the children themselves, would soon result in at least a reasoned estimation being given in place of a mere guess.

*Geography and Nature-study.*—Teachers are gradually adopting the new methods in this subject, and fair progress is being made in it. In several of the schools we found that records of the observations taken during the year had been kept, and the note-books contained much interesting information which had been obtained by the pupils themselves. It seems to us that Maori children are not such keen observers of nature as European children are, and even if they know the facts, they simply take them for granted, without troubling to seek the reason. Indeed, we have met instances in which the explanation of natural phenomena is regarded by the older people as mere invention of the white man. To them the earth is still flat, being bounded by cliffs over which the sun drops every evening. It was not until the adults had actually witnessed the metamorphosis of a butterfly shown in the nature-lessons taken in a Hokianga school that they were prepared to accept the teacher's statement as being correct. It is more than likely that the children imbibe old-fashioned ideas from their elders, and