

does greater demands on the teacher's skill, is improving as teachers realize the importance of grounding their lessons mainly on the pupil's experience and observation of natural phenomena instead of slavishly trusting to a text-book.

Our experience of the treatment of history in nearly all our schools would appear to be similar to that of Inspectors in other parts of the Dominion, the general opinion being that it is far from satisfactory. The Historical Readers in use are most interesting and beautifully illustrated; but, notwithstanding their attractiveness, the scholars lay them aside at the end of the year with only very vague notions of the right sequence and relative importance of the events they have been reading about.

Interest in the various branches of handwork is well maintained, and the popularity of the lessons in cookery, woodwork, and gardening is unabated.

The system of supplying free books has not our approval. In the first instance, so far as this district is concerned, there was no call for the issue of free books; and now that the scheme has been tested for a few years there is a fairly general agreement that it is objectionable both from the economic and from the hygienic point of view.

For a little over two years now all the ordinary repairs and painting of school buildings have been carried out by the Board's staff of workmen, and we have much pleasure in recording our opinion that the policy of the Board in this matter has been a wise one. Single and dual desks, made in our own workshop, are being supplied to all new schools, and from time to time, as the funds of the Board permit, the newer pattern of desk is being sent out to other schools where the need for a change is most pressing.

Before closing we desire to assure the Board of Education and the people of South Canterbury that in the teaching staff of the district they have a body of loyal public servants devoted to the best interests of the children placed in their charge.

We have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Timaru.

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A., } Inspectors.
A. BELL, M.A., }

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Education Office, Dunedin, 31st March, 1911.

We have the honour to present our general report on the work for the year 1910.

In our report for 1909 we expressed the opinion that, if due care were exercised by head teachers in the classification of their pupils, at least 80 per cent. of the pupils presented for the proficiency examination should succeed in winning the certificate. This year we have to report that generally teachers have shown more discretion in the promotion of their pupils and have exacted more thorough mastery of the work from the several classes than formerly. Although several instances of undue promotion of individual scholars have been commented on, we have seldom had to report adversely on the classification of a school as a whole. On the other hand, we have not found teachers freely availing themselves of the opportunity to promote pupils who are considerably above the average of the class. In every large class there are a considerable number of pupils who cannot master the work in less than eighteen months, while there are a few who can be prepared for promotion in less than a year. Too often the rate of progress of the class is controlled by the attainments and mental power of the former, and the latter are for a considerable period kept marking time. Judicious promotions during the year or the working of the class in two divisions would obviate this, would act as an incentive to increased effort by the large middle section, would permit of the clever children being kept fully and profitably employed, and would afford the chance of gaining scholarships to some who, through age-restrictions, are precluded where the system of annual promotion alone is adopted. We are fully aware of the difficulties and dangers of mid-year promotions, but we are convinced that much more could be done in this connection than is being done, especially in classes below Standard III.

Wide discretion is now permitted to teachers in connection with the subject-matter and methods of instruction, and we are pleased to record that, with regard to their programmes of work, our teachers have, in most cases, deserved the confidence reposed in them. Most of the schemes have been well compiled, the aim being to make the work comprehensive and efficient. There are some teachers, however, who seem to forget that good teaching involves fresh thinking. They attempt to carry out schemes of work which were accepted as satisfactory some years ago, but which now bear no mark of the improvement that should result from greater experience and more intimate acquaintance with the trend of modern aims and methods. The compilation of fresh schemes each year demands from the teacher earnest thought, tends to keep him out of the slough of routine, and gives his work a brightness and freshness advantageous to himself and his pupils.