

A review of the notes taken during our visits to the schools and of our reports submitted to the Board enables us to make some general remarks on the subjects of instruction. With regard to reading, steady improvement continues to be made. Greater facility in oral reading has resulted from the wider use of supplementary reading-books; but with this facility there has not always been a corresponding development of clearness of articulation and enunciation. Not only in the formal reading-lesson, but on every occasion of oral answering, distinctness of utterance should be insisted on; and the utmost care should be taken to guard against the slovenly use of the organs of speech. The attention given to these points will have a very appreciable effect in improving the children's spelling, which, as a rule, is very good in the dictation tests, but shows to less advantage when the pupils come to write their composition exercises, in which the words they have used glibly enough in oral speech prove serious stumbling-blocks in their written form.

In the majority of our schools the pupils show very good specimens of writing, the copy-books in most general use being Vere Foster's Medium. In the Fifth and Sixth Standards, when the pupils should be expected to have attained a reasonable correctness of letter formation, it should be the teacher's aim to train his pupils to write with greater freedom and rapidity while they are still under his supervision.

The advance made in written composition during recent years is still maintained. Many of our teachers have found the "Picture Composition" books of Lewis Marsh most suggestive and helpful. But so far as these aids to the teaching of composition are concerned, it will not be out of place to give warning that these books, excellent as they are, can be used with success only by those teachers who give diligent study to the method of instruction set forth in them, and who, having imbibed the spirit and aim of that method, throw themselves into its practical application with all the resource and enthusiasm at their command. Marsh's books are neither for the lazy teacher nor for the incompetent.

Arithmetic holds its place as one of the best-taught subjects. There is one defect which we have had to refer to somewhat frequently during the year—namely, the insufficient practice in mental work in the middle and higher standards. It should be the rule that the first portion of the time set apart for the arithmetic lessons should be devoted to oral work bearing on the sums for the day, so that the pupil may become familiar with the methods by questions which come out easily before he attempts examples involving much computation that can only be done with the aid of pen and paper. In some of the schools in Scotland it was the custom of the headmaster to group the higher standards for a weekly contest in rapid calculation in the simple money rules, the pupil-teachers also being brought into the competition, and so put on their mettle to hold their own against the brightest scholars. The training thus given was a most valuable one, and we should be pleased to see the old custom adopted here.

In many of our schools geography is taught on right lines, with very satisfactory results. Much of the work is based on the observation of their surroundings and of actual phenomena by the pupils, and may very fairly claim to be nature-study in some of its most interesting aspects. Many of the teachers make most excellent use of the illustrations from our weekly papers, and of the sets of stereoscopic views which have been supplied by the Board as aids to the teaching of geography, both commercial and physical. Some of our best teachers make the lessons in mathematical geography really interesting and educative, the ready co-operation of the pupils in calculations and experiments indicating their grasp of the matter with which they are dealing; but teaching of this kind is not general.

In previous reports we have pointed out the need for more systematic treatment of history. As a general rule, lessons from the historical reading-books are read and explained in class, but the lessons are not sufficiently impressed by vivid oral teaching.

We have been much pleased with the action of the Department in publishing suitable songs for the children in the *School Journal*. In our large schools singing generally shows great improvement, and in some of the small schools it is quite a pleasing feature of the school-work.

The Technical Director's report shows that handwork, both elementary and advanced, is very general throughout the district. In the beginning of the year the Board lost the valuable services of their agricultural instructor, Mr. J. Brown, B.Sc., who is now Principal of the Queensland Agricultural College. His place has been taken by Mr. W. Martin, B.Sc., who is showing great enthusiasm in his work.

The district has been unfortunate in losing at one time our teachers of cookery. Miss Wilson (now Mrs. McLeod) and Miss Rennie (now in the service of the Wellington Education Board) had proved themselves most capable teachers, and in many of the homes of South Canterbury their names will be long remembered; and the skill which they imparted to hundreds of our girls will be contributing to the health and happiness of the community when fractions, vulgar and decimal, and other school-girl vexations have long since vanished to the limbo of things foolish and forgotten.

Whilst much has been accomplished in recent years towards the beautifying of school-grounds, there still remains much to be done within the schools in the adornment of the rooms. It should be the aim of every teacher to make his school a beautiful place within and without. Maps hung awry or stacked in corners, and cupboards with an overflow of miscellaneous articles on top, are neither hygienic nor pleasing to look at.

We desire to put on record our appreciation of the practical interest shown by School Committees in everything pertaining to educational matters in their own neighbourhood and in the district as a whole. We would also express our appreciation of the zeal and professional skill of the teachers of South Canterbury as a body; and we have much pleasure in reporting favourably on the order and discipline of the schools and on the manners and general behaviour of the scholars.

We have, &c.,

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A. BELL, M.A., } Inspectors.

The Chairman, South Canterbury Education Board.