

by force of circumstances, been obliged occasionally to acquiesce in appointments of somewhat dubious wisdom. The necessity, therefore, for making suitable arrangements for the training of such teachers is urgent, while the fact is borne home to us strongly that if the efficiency of these schools is to be maintained higher salaries for the lower-grade schools must be offered than obtain at present. In connexion with the training of these teachers, it seems to us feasible that the Department should guarantee the value of the correspondence classes by which teachers in the more remote centres are trained, by taking the arrangement of these classes in its own hands. Suitable instructors could doubtless be selected for the work from the existing training-college staffs.

Considering the difficulty just discussed, it is a question whether the Department should yet authorize the appointment of additional assistants beyond the limits already arranged. The substitution of an assistant for two pupil-teachers, where allowed by the regulations, is not in every case practicable; the assistants available are not, in some cases, at all equal in usefulness to the pupil-teachers displaced.

Unless the remuneration of probationers is made more liberal than at present, it is certain that a considerable number of those appointed will be possessed of the lower qualification for entry—a pass in the Junior Civil Service Examination or a Junior Free Place. Experience has taught us that such probationers find great difficulty in passing, at the end of their two years' course, the examination prescribed—Matriculation or teachers' D. They are thus debarred from entrance to the training college, and either drift out of the service or are appointed to positions where there is little hope of their improving their status. In either case the purpose of the Probationer Regulations is defeated.

We are in sympathy with teachers in wishing to see their clerical work cut down to the narrowest limits consistent with efficient management, and we are pleased to hear that considerable relief will be granted in this respect during the year. Certain records, however, must remain, and it is our duty to see that these are carefully prepared and kept. Chief among these is the annual scheme, which should be ready for inspection early in the year in a complete state, not only for the satisfaction of the Inspectors, but for the benefit of the teacher himself and his school.

We append a few notes on the quality of the instruction in certain subjects.

So far as the mechanical art of reading is concerned, there is little to complain of. The study of phrasing should begin in the lowest classes, in which, too, the method should be markedly phonetic. Pupils in all classes should be constantly called on to give the complete sense of passages read. Even in Standard VI this was done during the past year very haltingly at times. In recitation we too frequently found the exercise had degenerated into a mere memorizing of the lines; unless it appeals to the understanding and feeling of the reciter, its value is very trivial.

Though the processes in arithmetic are set down clearly, there is still a tendency to refer problems to a type in the class-book. Greater accuracy would result from the free employment of mental work in all standards, and from a more thorough knowledge of the tables required. Decimals still constitute a stumbling-block in Standard V work.

The results in drawing vary much in quality, but are, on the whole, satisfactory. There is reason to believe that where object-drawing is practised the teacher sometimes renders too obvious assistance. Unless in the case of handwork and arithmetic, there is too little correlation between drawing and other subjects.

As regards composition, we believe that the grouping of Standards III and IV has had very beneficial results. The essays in the two upper classes are more fluent than formerly, and contain comparatively few syntactical errors. Oral composition does not yet receive the attention it deserves. In some of our infant classes it is almost wholly neglected, though there are abundant opportunities of cultivating it. In the higher classes the pupils in many cases find much difficulty in expressing themselves in continuous answers of any length. It is notable that in a good many cases where formal grammar had received thorough treatment, the essays were not of a high quality. This seems to prove that in these cases the importance of formal grammar in the teaching of composition had been over-estimated, and that composition *per se* had not received sufficient attention.

There is a slight but distinct improvement in the teaching of geography, due to some extent, we believe, to a better appreciation of the spirit of the syllabus. In physical geography, however, there is still a strong tendency to rely too much on book-work; the valuable training to be gained by direct appeal to the facts of nature is thus lost. In Standard VI the political geography of New Zealand was in many cases very indifferently known; this points either to slipshod work in the lower standards or insufficient revisal in the upper.

Though there are a few schools in which singing is well taught, the results, generally speaking, are only fair. Where voice-training exercises are taken, downward scales should be largely employed to counteract the upward forcing of the chest-voice. Where part-singing is taught, it is, as a rule, wise to choose two-part songs for equal voices.

We cannot close this report without some reference to the contemplated retirement of Mr. Neill after twenty-eight years' able and faithful service as Secretary to the Board. During our long association with him we have invariably found him sympathetic and helpful, and we are doing him only bare justice in here acknowledging his unfailing and cheerful readiness to facilitate our work by all means in his power.

We have, &c.,

The Chairman, Southland Education Board.

JAS. HENDRY,)
A. L. WYLLIE,) Inspectors.