

Result of Inspection.—The reports of the Inspectors show that the teachers as a whole are making an earnest attempt to do good work on the lines indicated. The majority appear to have grasped the fact that common-sense is the essence of the system, and that the cultivation of sound hygienic habits, combined with regular practice, is essential to success. The attention to technique was as good as could be expected in view of the short training. The most common faults again were—(1) Want of good command; (2) lack of discipline; (3) want of thoroughness; (4) faulty progression.

There are five powerful factors in the educational and school environment which seriously interfere with and prevent proper progress of the system: these are,—

- (1.) Time allotted to the subject.
- (2.) Improper home influences in habits of bathing, clothing, eating, &c.
- (3.) Unsuitable equipment of schools—desks, schoolrooms, and playgrounds.
- (4.) Overcrowding of classes.
- (5.) Dual control and inspection (by Department and Boards).

I have placed them in this order by taking a common-sense view, first, of their proportionate influence against physical progress, and, second, the facility which they offer for reform.

Time allotted to the Subject.

When the regulations for physical education were issued last year it was considered impracticable (in view of the heavily loaded syllabus) to provide more than fifteen minutes' per day by regulation for instruction in this subject. Physical education, however, necessarily includes many matters detailed under the headings "Moral Instruction" and "Health," on pages 28 and 29 in the Education Syllabus of Instruction, for which separate time was not provided in the syllabus. In view of the amount of instruction involved, and the urgent need for it in the schools, the time allotted is quite inadequate. Satisfactory progress cannot be made until reasonable time is provided by the regulations, and by this means much could be done to reduce the bad effects of the remaining adverse influences.

Improper Home Influences.

Improper home influences, through being brought into the school environment by the child, must necessarily be referred to here. The physical education scheme can be the means of effecting great improvement in the faults specified under this heading.

(1.) *The Habit of Daily Washing or Bathing* of the body is neglected to an appalling extent, and is one of the primary factors in malnutrition, of which a large percentage of cases have been discovered in the medical inspections. The direct result of this neglect is defective circulation and inactivity of the skin, giving rise to many of the ailments common to children. It is generally the cause of the second fault.

(2.) *Too much Clothing.*—It is a common thing to find children wearing from four to seven garments where three would be sufficient; consequently excessive wasting through the skin occurs, and, as some of the surplus garments are usually made of most unsuitable material which does not admit of ventilation or evaporation, the tendency to malnutrition is increased.

To effect the very necessary improvement in these matters of home environment it will first be necessary to devote more time daily to the subject in the school time-tables, and the general use of a suitable school dress or costume would be of great physical benefit to children, an economic advantage to parents, and would facilitate the work of the teachers. It would also have some influence in the development of character in the children (especially girls) by dispensing with artificial evidence of social inequalities, and encouraging their recognition of personality in each other and a better appreciation of what they are rather than what they wear.

With a view to effecting the desired reform in this matter I propose to arrange (by calling tenders) for the supply of a suitable school costume (New Zealand make) at a minimum price. The Department would issue these to schools in any numbers as required, for either sex, at cost-price.

Unsuitable Equipment of Schools (Desks, Schoolrooms, Playgrounds).

Unsuitable desks are often the cause of a large percentage of the postural defects found amongst children—one form of scoliosis being well known to many medical gymnasts as the "State-school type." It is not practicable to make immediate improvement in this environment except at enormous expense, but by substituting adjustable desks more rapidly for the old ones, and providing open-air class-rooms at the schools where they are most urgently needed, more effective and rapid progress would be made. The most effective way to deal with this factor, promptly and cheaply, is to counteract its bad effects daily, and this can only be done by allowing sufficient time for daily instruction and practice.

Overcrowded School Classes.

The average school class in charge of each teacher trained up to the 31st March consisted of forty-five children. Under these circumstances the most experienced and capable instructor would