

Science, Nature-study, and Agriculture.—Science-teaching has passed through several phases, and to-day the child is placed in the position of an active investigator, who is not dominated at every turn by the teacher. Although his conclusions may not always be correct, they are as correct as he can make them, and each day will add to his knowledge. In connection with apparatus, the pupils should be encouraged to make as much as possible for themselves. The apparatus in some schools shows little resource on the part of the teacher, and that supplied by the Board seems to have, in many instances, little connection with the work done in the school, and apparently is regarded as necessary only for ornament, not use. Without wishing to undervalue the general progress made in nature-study—and in schools where the teachers have caught the true spirit of the subject the worth of the training given is beyond question—we have again to report that in certain cases, more especially in private schools, the treatment fails of its object because teachers do not recognize that the giving of information is not the principal aim, but rather the fostering of habits of observation, which, if maintained throughout the child's school life, will go far towards making him approach his life's work in a true scientific spirit and to find in the study of natural phenomena a never-failing source of pleasure. "We live in a wonderful and beautiful world, full of interest; one which is most important to understand, and fatal to misunderstand; and yet so fatal have been our methods of instruction, there is the most curious ignorance of common things."

While in some schools good work in agriculture has been done on sound scientific lines, in a number the progress made is not altogether satisfactory. Too much time is spent in such mere mechanical work as hoeing, weeding, &c., and too little on the explanation by experiment and observation of the elementary principles upon which intelligent garden-work depends. In regard to programmes of work it is not desirable that teachers should follow hard-and-fast rules, but rather that they should seize the opportunity of developing their own powers of initiative, and of arranging their work to suit the soil and climatic conditions of their district. Some teachers have neglected to comply with the Board's regulations in regard to the keeping of log-books. We take this opportunity of expressing our appreciation of the zeal and ability with which Mr. Malcolm discharged his duties during his tenure of office. Mr. Martin, the present agricultural instructor, has already given proof that under his direction agriculture will fully maintain its importance as a subject in our school curriculum.

In conclusion, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the "most potent factor in education is personality." Professor Drummond says that "a school is not so much a place for making scholars as for making souls." Hence the necessity for "habitually striving to live with wise thoughts and right feelings." This we believe many of our teachers are honestly trying to do. Their ideals are high, and they are animated by a noble sense of duty. The response given to the call of the Homeland at the present crisis is some proof of this, and deserves grateful recognition. As Inspectors, we wish to acknowledge the readiness with which the teachers have tried to meet the demands of the new syllabus and the loyal attempt made by them to improve their knowledge of matters incidental thereto. But success can only come from continuous effort; and, as Donald E. Fraser says in his inspiring little book, "Thoughts for Teachers," "Teachers should be so impressed with the truly tremendous power for weal or woe which lies in their manners, morals, and methods that they will ever strive to improve themselves morally, socially, intellectually, and physically; that so long as they teach they shall be keen students. The teacher should be in all respects a model for his pupils: not a perfect paragon, but a good workaday model, with a few lovable failings to keep him in touch with the children. The teacher's ways are sure to be imitated consciously and unconsciously by his pupils. The best lessons in courtesy, cleanliness, tidiness, punctuality, kindness, honesty, &c., are not clever lectures but daily examples."

We have, &c.,

WM. BROCK,	} Inspectors.
CHAS. D. HARDIE,	
S. C. OWEN,	
J. B. MAYNE,	

The Chairman, North Canterbury Education Board.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 15th March, 1915.

We have the honour to submit our annual report on the schools of this district for the year 1914.

At the close of the year the number of schools in operation was eighty-five. The household school at Struan was discontinued from the beginning of the year, and in July the Burke's Pass School, which has had a continuous existence for over thirty years and had at one time fifty pupils in attendance, was closed for lack of pupils. Owing to the rapid increase of population in Timaru, a new school was established in the western suburbs, and in the meantime this school is conducted as a side school under the control of the Timaru Main Committee. In August a school was opened at Four Peaks in a cottage belonging to one of the settlers. In addition to the public schools, the five Roman Catholic schools were also inspected.