

early part of November. By such an arrangement parents were not called upon to incur the expense involved in sending pupils to a central examination. This arrangement has worked satisfactorily for the past three years, and we see no valid reason why it should be departed from. Throughout the district 1,508 candidates presented themselves for examination for a certificate of proficiency. Of these, 1,218 were awarded the certificate of proficiency and 159 the certificate of competency.

*Methods of Teaching.*—The methods in general use throughout the district are well chosen, and are applied with a directness and vigour that produce very satisfactory results. We note a material improvement in the work of those unclassified teachers who had the opportunity of attending the courses in methods of teaching at Oamaru and Dunedin. Concrete work forms a prominent, but not over-prominent, part in all schools, and the pupils are being encouraged more and more to observe, to master the principles placed before them, and then to apply independently the principles thus mastered. In all teaching there must be copious illustrative and demonstrative work on the part of the teacher, but there must also be very material individual effort on the part of the taught. It is in this phase of the work that we have noted most improvement during the year.

*Notes on Subjects.*—The mechanical side of reading continues to be well attended to in most of the schools, but we are not at all satisfied that this important subject is being made to tell so fully on other branches of school-work as it should. The primal aim of reading should be thought-getting and interpretation in terms of the reader's own experience. Pupils should be trained to feel that the correct naming and grouping of words is not reading; there must be a precedent study of the passage read, and an arousing of the understanding and feeling of the performer, if the real educational value of the subject is to be gained. Such treatment of reading would react most beneficially on other branches of school-work, but especially on oral expression, composition, and history. It is for this reason that we again emphasize the importance of well-directed silent reading in our schools. Ample material for this purpose is now provided in the school, and class libraries found in most of our schools. In the schools in which these libraries exist and in which the reading of the books is dovetailed into the school-work we have found the pupils more alert and receptive, better informed, and more fluent in speech and composition than was the case in schools in which these accessories to school-work were either neglected or wanting altogether. We are pleased to find that recent legislation makes it obligatory on every School Committee to provide a school and class library.

Spelling, as judged by tests from the reading-book and from the written composition, is good throughout the district; writing is good, but still too slowly done; and recitation is generally well memorized and tastefully rendered. We should like to find teachers extend the scope of their selections in connection with the pieces chosen for recitation. The repetition of the same class pieces year by year conveys the impression that many of our teachers have but a limited acquaintance with the glorious company of our English poets.

Formal grammar continues to receive satisfactory attention, and much good work in analysis and synthesis and in the correction of faulty sentences has come under our observation; but we must again impress on teachers the need for systematically training their pupils to reason out the functions of words before attempting to classify them. Composition, both written and oral, has been generally satisfactory. In dealing with this subject teachers are realizing more and more the advantage of plenty of introductory oral work; they are guiding their pupils to sources of information in the libraries, magazines, and elsewhere; they are insisting more generally on the preparation of outlines for essays. The results are shown in exercises marked by fuller knowledge, greater freedom of expression, and more methodical arrangement of matter.

The teaching of arithmetic is on the whole good, and we are able to record an all-round improvement in accuracy in this branch. In the junior classes the tables are well memorized, after a due measure of concrete teaching has been given; but we note in some cases a neglect to associate the objects with the printed figure. This should be guarded against. Similarly in the senior classes there is not, in many schools, the close correlation between the mental and the written arithmetic of the day that should be found if the teaching in this subject is to reach its greatest efficiency.

While not a few of our teachers are doing very satisfactory work in nature-study, few of them can be accurately described as nature-students. The result is that they are unable to arouse to any great extent in their pupils a native interest in the world of nature. Most of the work done in schools is connected with plant-life, but there is little attempt to work out the close association between this branch and the insect and animal life of the neighbourhood. The interesting realm of bird-life is practically untouched so far as our native birds are concerned. We would direct the attention of teachers to the splendid work being done in Australia by the Gould League of Bird-lovers in the hope that some of them may be inspired to take up earnestly the study of our native birds.

In addition to the ordinary work in connection with the school-gardens, several schools entered heartily into the competitions inaugurated in connection with potato and turnip growing, and keen interest was taken by the girls in their pansy competition. The display of roots shown by the district high schools at the Otago Agricultural and Pastoral Society's Winter Show was quite a striking feature of the exhibition, while the competition for the same society's prizes for exhibits of school-garden produce was exceptionally keen.

We note with satisfaction that candidates from our schools continue to take high positions in the junior competition for scholarships—not that we consider the achievements of a few selected ones to be a fair criterion of the state of education in their district, but rather as an indication that we still possess our share of talented and industrious youth and of enthusiastic and skilful teachers.

*Sedentary Character of School Life.*—We have frequently had to complain that school-work was made unnecessarily sedentary, with a tendency to bodily stagnation. We have repeatedly recommended that every lesson should be followed by recreative physical and musical exercises, so that the bodily processes may be quickened and stimulated; but we wish to emphasize the fact that the harm-