

a supplementary instead of a preliminary step to the strict geometrical solutions. The aim of the practical work should be to prepare the mind to follow in logical order the various steps in Euclid's proofs. Better progress would be made in algebra and more interest aroused if long mechanical operations in multiplication, division, &c., were greatly reduced and pupils introduced as soon as possible to the solution of problems. These demand intelligence and afford excellent training in consecutive and accurate thinking.

In most schools where a commercial course is provided it is usually alternative to Latin. This course is frequently taken by pupils whose school life will on an average not exceed two years. Sometimes it consists of book-keeping, commercial arithmetic, shorthand, and typewriting; in other cases the commercial work is less extensive. The writing in the pupils' books and the neatness of the setting-out ranged from moderate to very good. Where a high standard of penmanship and great care were insisted on in the lowest forms very creditable work was done in the second and succeeding years.

Although in a few schools, chiefly private schools, an attempt is made to teach science mainly through a text-book, with occasional demonstration lessons by the teacher, in practically all the endowed schools individual laboratory practice is a conspicuous feature of the teaching. Careful methodical work, with attention to weighing, measuring, &c., is general, and in some schools excellent use is made of the pupils' calculations with a view to give a knowledge of average results. In the notebooks concise descriptions of the experiments performed and sketches or well-executed diagrams of the apparatus used are the rule. In a few cases badly kept records of work done were met with. Most of the botany notebooks reached a high standard of merit, and the specimens collected and mounted by the girls were highly creditable. I reported last year, "In the best schools the pupils are investigators endeavouring to find out by interrogating nature what her secrets really are. Material is dealt with in some definite fashion under the skilled direction of the teacher, the results are carefully noticed and set down, and inferences are drawn. The results obtained may be unsatisfactory, and the inferences may be crude; but they represent the pupils' own investigations, and so the method is sound. It is the method of inquiry—facts are brought under strict scrutiny, and conclusions are drawn from observation and experiment." I am satisfied that this is applicable to the science-work in the schools at the present time. Some of the best science-work, and certainly work of a thoroughly practical nature, is being done in agriculture, the experiments being intimately associated with the leading agricultural products of the district. Interesting experiments in fruit-culture, permanent grasses, root crops, fodder crops, &c., have been carried out, analyses of soil have been made, and numerous fertilizer tests applied. Careful records have been kept of the work done.

The relation of home preparations to the question of overpressure is a constantly recurring one. From careful inquiries made on the occasion of the inspection of schools it does not appear that there is much ground for attributing cases of overstrain to excessive home-work. The Principal invariably specifies the time to be set aside for home-work, and either makes herself responsible for the supervision of this side of school life, or appoints a form mistress to exercise the necessary supervision. The time set aside for the preparation of home lessons ranges from an hour or an hour and a half in the lowest form to two or two hours and a half in the highest. Principals have assured me that when parents complain about the effects of home lessons on the health of their children home-work is discontinued, and that cases rarely occur in which it is necessary to make this concession.

Almost without exception highly satisfactory provision is made for the physical education of pupils. Organized school games are played with great spirit, swimming and first aid are taught, and regular systematic instruction is given in Swedish drill. In some schools gymnastic exercises are given under competent instructors in properly equipped gymnasia, and in all boys' schools or mixed schools the boys are drilled as Senior Cadets. The European War has directed attention to physical education of the people, and the need for turning out of our schools boys and girls who are strong and healthy, for it is evident that considerable power of endurance is a very important factor in this struggle. The outlook on physical education has undergone considerable change in recent years. Formal gymnastics are not now regarded as the be-all and end-all of physical training. Many simple exercises have been introduced, and greater variety in the movements has had a beneficial effect in lessening strain.

In almost every school Principals have exercised the privilege of recommending for senior free places pupils whose attainments justify the State in continuing their secondary education for a further period. The recommendation is determined by the general average quality of the work of each pupil ascertained by term examinations, and decided after consultation with the class teacher. This method is sound, and if reasonable discrimination is exercised, and a good standard of work is insisted on as a minimum qualification for promotion, a truer estimate of the merits of pupils is arrived at than is possible in a single outside examination. In most cases the Principal's estimate was thoroughly reliable. When a difference of opinion occurred subsequent inquiry generally showed the soundness of the teacher's judgment. There is not the slightest doubt that on the whole the Principals have used commendable discrimination in their recommendations.

The management of the schools and the devotion of the teachers to all that concerns the well-being of their pupils deserve high commendation. In most cases no effort is too great and no task is too heavy if improved efficiency can be achieved, and any suggestions made have received thoughtful, earnest consideration. Teachers recognize that their work is more or less circumscribed, because their attention and energies are centred on one school, while Inspectors see every variety of school, and have in consequence a wider experience. This, however, produces no antagonism between teachers and Inspectors, but is for the mutual benefit of both where the problem confronting each school is viewed in the light of a wider experience sympathetically applied.

The Director of Education, Wellington.

T. H. GILL,
Inspector of Secondary Schools.