

schools the total attendance at which in some cases does not in the aggregate exceed thirty pupils. The work of guiding the teachers of such tiny schools could be done just as well by a skilled teacher, acting under the general direction and oversight of the Inspector.

The call to arms has, without doubt, seriously affected the efficiency of our schools. The appointments to the vacancies caused by enlistments are temporary, and involve in not a few cases the employment of teachers who either have had no experience at all, or who in the ordinary course would have been expected still further to prove their efficiency in the lower grades. In the main, however, the schools of Grade III and upwards have well maintained their efficiency, and in the larger schools we are of the opinion a definite advance has been made. In their case we have sought to secure a closer control by the head teachers of the details of organization, and a more intimate share in general class teaching; in both matters we have met with loyal support.

Instruction.—With regard to the subjects of instruction and the methods of teaching, we have urged the importance of bringing the lessons into closer relation one to another—*e.g.*, history to geography, drawing to handwork, &c.—and bringing the instruction into closer relation to the needs of the people. We hope, therefore, to find considerable improvement in the teaching of mental arithmetic, including devices for shortening calculations, and to find history and civics taught more from the view of what the nation requires of its citizens. Formal composition or grammar, as far as is specified in the syllabus, receives careful attention in very many schools, but we regret to note that while the composition—*i.e.*, thought-expression—in the junior division is of excellent promise, that of the senior division in general shows lack of definite advance from class to class. Reading is fluent, but the cultural value of this subject, and of recitation, is not widely enough recognized. The consequence of this is that expressive reading and recitation are rarely heard. One reason given for the weakness is the difficult and uninteresting character of the lessons in the miscellaneous reader; but another reason is lack of temperament in the teacher. If the poetry produces no glow in the teacher's soul it is not likely the pupil will feel any thrill of interest. As regards history, we are glad to say we are much better pleased than we have been for some years past. Geography still suffers from lack of intelligent treatment; but there are notable exceptions among the schools. Drawing and handwork are both improving, thanks to the indefatigable efforts of the Board's special instructor.

Physical Instruction and Games.—A very satisfactory advance is being made in all the schools in the direction of giving more attention to the pupils' physical development. During the year refresher courses of training for teachers were held in Hawera, Wanganui (on three occasions), Marton, and Palmerston North. The teachers were greatly interested in these courses, and the schools benefited to a corresponding extent. Organized games now form an important feature of the playground activities of the pupils, and there are few teachers who fail to give adequate attention to playground duty. During the coming year we hope the physical instructor and the medical officer will formulate some simple system of testing the effects of the drill and games, so that we may have more reliable data than we have at present on which to base our conclusions. The time has arrived, too, when more attention should be given to corrective exercises designed to remedy physical defects in children. So far very little has been done in this direction.

Buildings and Grounds.—In the main the buildings and grounds are in good order, and there are very few instances of neglect under the present administration. The Board's staff of painters has, however, not yet been able to overtake past deficiencies, and consequently some of the buildings are suffering. During the coming year we propose to make full notes, as far as our ability goes, on the state of the buildings throughout the district. During the year local efforts have resulted in the improvement of several of the school-grounds, and both teachers and Committees are to be complimented on their zeal in this direction. While some of the grounds, particularly in the case of a few of the larger schools, are still somewhat unsightly, we are glad to report that, on the whole, a very satisfactory degree of interest is shown in the school environment.

Training of Teachers.—The academic training of teachers, both as regards the special Saturday classes and the correspondence classes, has been exceedingly well carried on during the year. The reports of the instructors show that, except in the case of singing, the arrangements made have been effective in securing both the attendance and progress of our uncertificated teachers and trainees. The usual winter school for teachers working in the remote parts of the district was held, and was well worth the money expended on it. We have every confidence in assuring the Department that the grant made for the training of teachers is well and economically expended. We still feel the need of the model country school for training purposes referred to in our last annual report, and trust that the importance of this matter will not be overlooked.

District High Schools.—[See E.—6, Report on Secondary Education.]

Education of the Maori.—[See E.—3, Report on Education of Maori Children.]

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We have, &c.,

T. B. STRONG, M.A., B.Sc.

JAMES MILNE, M.A.

DAVID STEWART.

The Director of Education. Wellington.