

Grade III and upwards, if within convenient radius from the larger schools, should be visited, and we have arranged accordingly. Classes in physical instruction for teachers were held on Saturdays at various centres, and proved of much benefit. We are glad to note that in one school at least systematic instruction is afforded in swimming and life-saving, and we hope that this important subject will receive more attention, especially where facilities for bathing are provided.

*Medical Inspection.*—No Medical Inspector has paid a visit to the Hawke's Bay schools in the ordinary way since July, 1915, while the Poverty Bay schools appear not to have been visited since August, 1914. Some years ago expensive weighing-machines were sent to different schools. Cases are known where these have never been used, and they have fallen into a state of disrepair. When the epidemic of diphtheria was at its height, urgent representations were made for the services of the Medical Inspector of Schools. Dr. Paterson accordingly visited the district, and made systematic investigations in every school where the disease was prevalent, with the result that in quite a short time the trouble was overcome. Immediately upon the appearance of an epidemic there arises a demand from the parents that the school should be closed. While we have every regard for the feelings of parents at such times, we would point out that the mere closing of the school does not prevent the spread of the disease, nor does it render the children less liable to attack. In this connection we may again quote from Dr. Paterson's report: "I may add that an unsatisfactory feature of all schools closing on account of an epidemic is the impossibility of controlling the movements of the children during that period. Thus, on being set free from school, hundreds go to the cinematograph, or play about in the streets, and are probably exposed to infection to a greater degree than they would be at school."

*General Efficiency.*—The following remarks are submitted in respect to the quality of the work shown during the year in the various subjects of the curriculum:—

*Reading.*—The reading is, on the whole, satisfactory, and the recitation fair. We think that in every class more attention should be given to securing an intelligent comprehension of the subject-matter, so that the pupils can express in their own language the sense conveyed by the passage read. It is desirable also that a more natural method of teaching reading should be introduced into many of the infant classes. This should certainly include a larger amount of teaching phonics than is at present made use of, and the earliest lessons should be taught, as suggested in the syllabus, chiefly from the blackboard or from reading-sheets, the primer being withheld until a somewhat later stage. Further, we would draw attention to the fact that, especially in the junior classes, an abundant supply of reading-books is essential. The custom of confining the reading-matter to one or two small books per year is still followed in many schools. The result is that these pupils, whose verbal memory is at its keenest pitch, do not read but simply recite the lesson by heart, and this practice is enhanced in cases by an undue recourse to simultaneous reading. The child should be encouraged to regard reading not as a school task, but as a pleasurable occupation, and as the most natural means of adding to his stock of knowledge. Inquiries made in several cases showed us that there was little or no home reading, especially among country children, whose time is fully occupied by home requirements. The opportunity must therefore be given them for reading as widely as possible at school. This implies a more extensive use of silent reading, suitable books being read rapidly for the sake of their contents. The knowledge of New Zealand history in our schools has undoubtedly been largely increased by the children's own reading in the *School Journal*, and in the books written by the late Dr. McNab, to whose endeavours to create an interest in the story of their own land the children in this district owe very much.

*Writing.*—Very good writing is common in the district, and the subject may be regarded as being satisfactorily taught. We find, however, that the text adopted in each standard varies when different subjects are being dealt with, children in Standard II, for instance, using full text in their written compositions and exercises, and half-text in their copybooks. The overuse of full text does not tend to the production of a fluent hand; the text of the copybook adopted for each standard class should be employed throughout all the written work of that class.

*English Composition.*—In many of the larger schools the English composition is taught with commendable efficiency, but in many of the remaining schools the work falls below the standard that should be expected. The schemes prepared for the early stages of the work lack system, and there are grounds for thinking that the selection of topics for composition lessons is too often haphazard. The value of oral composition is not sufficiently recognized, and it is more or less discontinued beyond Standard II. After consideration of the work submitted we are led to conclude that the subject does not receive the active teaching that its importance demands, and that there is not sufficient practice given in it. Further, the many mistakes in spelling, and the frequent misuse of simple words, point to the need of more adequate supervision and careful correction. The grammar also shows need of more consistent treatment, the results being disappointing. We have formed the opinion that for the less experienced teachers the requirements in this branch of English are too vaguely expressed, and that a more definite programme for each standard should be provided. The only other course open is to issue specimen schemes for the guidance of the weaker teachers.

*Arithmetic.*—The arithmetic may be regarded as fairly satisfactory; the need for more extensive practice in mental and oral work has, however, been impressed upon us. The wise teacher is he who takes mental work day after day, without fail. We have noted among the teachers of the infant and lower standard classes a tendency to exceed the provisions of the syllabus in respect to number at the expense of a thorough grounding in the composition of the numbers prescribed and of proper drill in the tables summarizing the results of their practical work. If the composition of the first twenty numbers be taught as thoroughly as it should be, the teachers will find that there is ample work contained in the process to fully occupy the time usually devoted to preparatory work.