

In this connection it may be stated that in determining the requirements in arithmetic for the new syllabus the Department, through the Senior Inspectors, obtained from representative business men in each centre their opinions as to the kind of arithmetic that a boy should know. The replies, if not all of service for the special purpose, were interesting and helpful, and the spirit in which the response was given was much appreciated.

The Inspectors do not consider that English composition has reached the standard of excellence that its importance demands, and it would appear that there is insufficient constructive effort and guidance on the part of the teachers. The writing of ordinary letters apparently does not receive sufficient attention in some districts, and, as this frequently offers the only direct evidence of educational attainment, it is a matter that should engage the best efforts of all teachers.

The revision of the syllabus has been the most important business of the year. The special committee set up by the Minister of Education to deal with the matter, and representative of both lay and professional opinion, performed its difficult task with much care and enthusiasm, and the results of its deliberations should prove of value to the Department. A full conference of Inspectors will be called during the summer recess to review the recommendations of the Syllabus Committee and to revise the primary-school syllabus. The Department has also to recognize the cordial assistance offered by the New Zealand Educational Institute in connection with the same matter.

The following extracts from the Inspectors' reports give further information upon their observations of the year's work in the schools:—

*Subjects of Instruction.*—In many schools pupils are being led to take some responsibility for their own education, to learn by their own activities, and to adopt a true team spirit of work to that end. We believe that the more general introduction of these methods is partly due to recommendations or suggestions made during our visits of the preceding year, but we willingly acknowledge that much of it has arisen spontaneously among earnest teachers who are themselves assiduously following the trend of modern opinion, and there is no doubt that much is due to the influence of the training college. It must not be thought, however, that the movement is confined to the younger teachers only. Many teachers of experience have shown that they are still capable of appreciating new ideas and of putting them into effective practice. Individual work is being given a larger place, and when this method is sanely applied we have found nothing but good results. There have not been wanting, however, instances where this kind of work has been conducted in a slipshod manner or carried to excess. We have had on many occasions to deplore the absence of good oral class lessons, the stimulating effects of which cannot be denied, even when they are delivered with full Herbartian formality. Particularly painful has it been sometimes to witness an oral lesson which consists in the pupils reading from the text-book "round the class" with a few comments from the teacher. We have found ourselves under the necessity of reporting on such "lessons" in fairly caustic terms. We hope in the future to be spared this necessity.—(*Otago*).

*English Composition.*—Perhaps the most outstanding feature this year was the superiority in composition and letter-writing of many of the country schools over the town schools. The work of the latter, though structurally and grammatically correct, was too often lacking in spontaneity and naturalness. In many cases it was marred by an artificiality that bordered on jargon. It displayed a lack of imagination: the pupils so failed to describe what they had seen as to lead to the conviction that they could not see. In place of a faithful and vivid record of observed facts, they gave too often a stereotyped recital of conditions which were as artificial as they were absurd. On reading such essays one feels that the pupils had been the victims of that over-zealous teaching which supplies them with "model" essays. That letter-writing is an art that can become perfect only by much practice in the writing of letters to real people was amply proved by the undeniable superiority of the letter-writing of the boarding-schools over that of the day schools. Compared with the former, with their fullness of fact and warmth of expression, the latter were arid and unemotional. Here again the superiority lay unquestionably with the country child; probably the town dweller feels less the social necessity for the writing of letters.—(*Hawke's Bay*).

This subject was not tested in our survey, but the information was elicited that composition is the most heartily disliked subject of the curriculum. Further investigations should be made to discover the reason. Perhaps the lack of incentive to write is one cause of the distaste for the subject. Teachers should do their best to provide a motive—for example, by encouraging actual correspondence with children in our own country or abroad. The pupils' essays are usually satisfactory. Letter-writing is generally good. We wish to stress the importance of teaching the proper forms of social and commercial letters.—(*Taranaki*).

In the teaching of English, oral expression by the pupils is being diligently fostered. The old lecture type of lesson in history and geography is being assessed at its proper value, and, by the aid of class libraries, the children are being trained in independent study of topics in these subjects. The habit of private reading, too, is steadily growing, and many of the teachers are to be commended for their efforts in the establishment of class libraries.—(*Canterbury*).

*Reading.*—In general, this subject is receiving good treatment. In some cases silent reading is not properly supervised and tested; it is often given to the pupils merely as an occupation and to some who cannot benefit by it. Many children are not trained to use their vocal powers sufficiently to make an expressive, clear, and distinct rendering of the passage read. Care should be taken that this defect does not develop as the outcome of individual reading; there is no reason that it should. Sufficient opportunity for reading aloud should be given to enable the children to cultivate clear and expressive utterance, and in this connection more attention should be given to accurate phrasing. In the upper-standard classes a portion of every reading lesson should be devoted to appreciation of the literary merit of the matter read. Teachers will find that time spent in this exercise will be reflected in an improvement in the quality of the style in composition.—(*Wanganui*).