

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

"One of the greatest changes in educational practice in recent years is the change of emphasis from the subject to the child. Formerly the teacher was preoccupied with success in giving instruction in certain subjects. Indeed, this is too often true at present. The teacher was the active agent, while the child's attitude was that of receptivity. Elaborate and effective methods of teaching were evolved—so much so that the teacher became a source of danger to his pupils. Nowadays the tendency is to stress methods of learning, with a view to making the pupil independent of extraneous help, training him in habits of study and giving him a sense of mastery over his surroundings."—(*Taranaki*.)

"Next to the formation of character, the most important function of the school is to train pupils to think and to act on their own initiative. Some few teachers deny to children this independence of thought and action, with the result that there is too much lecturing and too little teaching, too much of the teacher and too little of the child; but we note with pleasure, from the much wider outlook taken by many teachers, a happy augury for future educational progress when the new syllabus, with its greater freedom and wider scope for individual initiative, is adopted."—(*Auckland*.)

*English Composition and Grammar.*—"The Sixth Standard pupils' work was usually freer from grammatical and spelling errors than was that of the Fourth Standard child, but there was a similar paucity of ideas and a sameness in sentence-structure that could not possibly have existed had the teachers encouraged their pupils from Standard IV upwards, week by week, to explore the realm of books, magazines, and papers for themselves for information on set subjects, and had they been led in the oral composition lessons to express the results of their investigations. Possibly the fact that pupils above Standard IV in country districts usually have a considerable amount of farm-work to do may account for their lack of progress and the check in their academic advancement, but the teachers must shoulder a good deal of the responsibility. A common weakness is the absence of a purposeful progressive scheme in composition-writing from Standard I to Standard VI. Many teachers can see in essay work little more than assigning a topic and marking it in a merely mechanical manner. Nothing in the nature of a developing programme of sentence-manipulation is conceived by such teachers. Formal English is being treated much more usefully, and the analytic attack is giving place to the synthetic."—(*Auckland*.)

"While freedom of expression should be the first aim, some teachers appear to regard it as the sole aim. The resultant punctuation, sentence-structure, and arrangement of ideas are frequently distressing. Though the correct placing of the full stop can and should be taught in the lower standards, it is not uncommon to find the pupils of Standard V and Standard VI with vague ideas concerning this fundamental part of punctuation. Though the use of suitable phrases is becoming commoner, 'and' and 'so' are still much overworked connectives. The selection of topics for written work is a matter to which teachers should give special consideration. There is a distinct tendency towards overdoing the imaginative type of essay, in which 'flowery' language, unaccompanied by a mental picture, predominates, while pupils are unable to make a clear, logical, and plain statement on matter-of-fact topics. In this connection, teachers should guard against setting too wide a subject. A topic such as 'A visit to the Zoo' frequently degenerates into a list of names, with a complete absence of interesting detail. If the children were asked to write on one feature only, a much more vivid production would result."—(*Wellington*.)

*Reading.*—"A broader interpretation is being put upon the term 'reading' nowadays; it is usual to distinguish between oral reading and silent reading. This is a move in the right direction, but the stage already reached is by no means perfect. There are two chief dangers—(1) that the art of good oral reading will be lost; (2) that, owing to lack of purpose in silent reading, slovenly intellectual habits will be engendered. Many children read widely but do not reap commensurate gain. There is keen need for close supervision of silent reading, so that, without depriving the pupil of his pleasure, he may be guided and taught systematically. He should gain skill in reading for information, and his literary taste should to a considerable degree be moulded by what he reads during his primary-school career. With the large amount of silent reading that is being done it is absolutely necessary that some form of definite test be made, otherwise the lesson degenerates into a more or less useless skimming. Teachers have still to learn that a silent reading lesson is one of the most difficult to take successfully, and that the teacher who cannot question each pupil on the book he is reading has not adequately prepared himself for his day's work. This kind of reading presupposes the abandonment of purely class methods and the adoption of either sectionalization or group instruction. The day of the old class lesson, when each pupil read in turn, while 60 per cent. of the pupils were insufferably bored, is passing, and we are pleased to note that in a few schools it is being replaced by a group system which provides for individual differences in ability; while the practice of requiring pupils to question the reader on the context is gaining ground, and is proving a valuable means of ensuring attention, improving comprehension, and affording practice in oral expression. In general, however, teachers seem reluctant to relinquish the mass instruction of the class method, for, in spite of the almost universal acknowledgment of the reasonableness of grading a class, it is seldom that a thoroughgoing sectionalization of a class is carried out. Once teachers realize that mass methods must go, and that rational grading of a class is an effective plan, then not only reading but also English and arithmetic will take on new meanings. The bright pupil will be able to advance at a pace in keeping with his mental age, and the slower child will not have undue pressure brought to bear upon him. It is pleasing to find that more definite attention is now being paid to reading for content, particularly in the senior classes. Reading for pleasure alone there must be, but this should not be the only aim, and some reading should be done for a definite purpose and should be definitely tested in one of the many ways available. While in senior classes silent reading is the more valuable type, oral reading should not be entirely neglected. It is easy to swing to extremes—to overdo one phase at the expense of the other; a balance must be preserved, and both forms of reading should receive due attention."—(*Auckland*.)