

of the pupils in Standard VI. at the Stratford School being an exception deserving of special mention. In some cases it was clear that pupils had copied into their note-books a few lines on each subject, and had reproduced these word for word, without any reference to the particular point in the question upon which stress was laid. This portion of geography seems to be very difficult to teach, for the inferiority in the answering is pointed out in many of the reports of other districts. This is to be regretted, for the principles of physical geography are of much greater value, both educationally and practically, than are many of the bald facts committed to memory in general geography.

Some of the teachers are now making on black silesia their own blank maps, which contain exactly what is required for each standard. This very much lightens the burden of teaching, as the ordinary maps contain so many names that confusion may arise in the minds of the pupils.

To the class-subjects and the additional subjects I shall very briefly refer:—

*Grammar.*—The best work was seen in Standard III. and Standard IV., that of Standard V. and Standard VI. being as a rule inferior. Since grammar has been placed among the class-subjects a general falling-off in quality is reported throughout the colony, and no doubt such has been the case here, the time taken from grammar being devoted to composition.

*Science.*—The schools are not provided with apparatus, which for much of the work in the syllabus requires to be specially constructed. As, however, the teachers are allowed the greatest latitude in the selection of subjects for study, they should choose those portions which can be illustrated by simply-constructed appliances, and if the pupils' faculties of observation and reason are trained, good work is being accomplished. The first and second courses in agricultural knowledge are favourite studies, and under skilful treatment prove very interesting and instructive.

*Object-lessons.*—These are often neglected, and the methods of treatment are frequently capable of improvement. Few teachers make collections of the objects that are required for illustrating the lessons, though such can easily be procured. If teachers encouraged the co-operation of their pupils, suitable objects would soon be found, and could be kept as a nucleus of a school museum to serve for future lessons and for use in revision.

*History.*—History is moderately taught. When questioning a class I usually showed the pictures in the books, and asked the pupils to tell me what they saw, what persons were represented, and so on. Except in a few schools the answering was very weak, and Julius Caesar would be confounded with an ancient Briton and the Duke of Wellington in a very ludicrous fashion.

*Needlework.*—Needlework is taught in all schools, and the report of the Sewing Committee will be found appended hereto.

*Singing.*—Singing is taught in comparatively few schools, a fact which is to be much regretted, as it has an important disciplinary value, and is liked by the pupils.

*Discipline.*—The order in most of the schools is satisfactory. During the examinations the pupils were obedient, attentive, and well-behaved. Disorder is sometimes noticeable at change of lessons and at dismissal, and is due to the lack of proper class-drill. Every pupil should know exactly how to sit, stand, or move about, and all motions should be performed with precision and to appropriate words of command. In some of the schools the tone is capable of considerable improvement, and the pupils are not self-reliant in their work. The manners of the pupils vary very much indeed. At some schools the pupils were courteous and respectful, not only in the school-rooms, but also in the grounds and on the roads and streets; at others, again, courtesy, politeness, and respect seem unheard of.

In reporting on the different subjects I have several times mentioned the importance of paying attention to the methods adopted in the lower classes, and I should here like to point out how necessary it is for teachers to see that the elementary work is thoroughly and intelligently taught. As first impressions are often lasting impressions, it is essential that the early training should be good. Moreover, the work of one class should dovetail, as it were, into the work of another, otherwise the pupils are taught under a series of differing systems instead of under portions of one well-defined system.

There is another matter to which I must refer. The instruction is often given as though the subjects were utterly dissociated. Transcription is looked upon as a writing exercise and that only, and consequently if the writing be satisfactory the whole is satisfactory, even if error after error occur in spelling. In the same exercise, proper names may be written with small letters, and punctuation may be omitted altogether, but, as these errors do not come within the scope of a writing-lesson, little heed is paid to them. The weakness in spelling has been referred to, and permeates almost the whole of the work, composition in particular being frequently marred by it, an error not being heeded unless it occur in the dictation exercise. Again, an infraction of grammar is not corrected unless occurring in composition. Maps are used only in geography, and are neglected when places are mentioned in the history-lessons, the reading-lessons, or the object-lessons. There is thus an absence of coherence and unity militating against good educational results, to produce which it is better to teach well what is attempted than to attempt too much and to teach it badly.

I cannot fail to recognise the excellent efforts made by the Board to insure that, so far as possible, every child under its jurisdiction should receive the benefits of a primary education, and this in the face of great topographical and other difficulties. As Mount Egmont, with its radiating watercourses, is near the centre, it is absolutely necessary to place the schools closer together than would be required under other conditions. In trying to keep pace with the progress of settlement your Board must have been confronted with great difficulties, and how great these difficulties must have been one can estimate only after a careful perusal of the Board's previous reports and statistics. Again, in every school sewing is taught, and the remuneration of the sewing-mistresses withdraws a considerable sum from the funds of the Board. Other Boards, which are financially in a better position than the Taranaki Board, establish only aided schools when the attendance is below a certain number, and require the parents to contribute something to the support of the teacher, whereas your Board has borne the whole burden.

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