

The matter of reading lessons, object lessons, science lessons, geography, and especially history lessons, lends itself to the treatment I am recommending. There is no doubt that, in spite of constant practice in answering questions, our older pupils are singularly inarticulate; though the difficulty of making due allowance for diffidence and the possible depressing effect of an Inspector's presence (which many teachers manage to get their pupils to regard as inquisitorial rather than frankly inquiring and friendly) inclines one to discount his frequently unfavourable impressions. Even when all the pupils are at their ease—no unusual experience—this defect is distinctly noticeable.

Handwork—usually cane-weaving and modelling in plasticine—has been taken up with considerable success in a number of the smaller schools. Now that payments in aid of materials are to be made for an hour's instruction a week I expect an extensive development of this work. Curiously enough, when I asked the Minister to sanction this concession a year ago the request was refused. The Department is to be congratulated on taking a wiser view of the question. History is the subject that is omitted where handwork is taken up.

Under the new scheme for teachers' salaries no provision is made for teaching sewing in small schools taught by male teachers, and its teaching has in many such cases been discontinued. This is much to be regretted.

The teaching of the primer classes continues in the main most satisfactory. In the smaller schools careless writing at desks is sometimes complained of, and oral arithmetic (chiefly oral addition) is now and then unfavourably noticed. There has been a great extension of kindergarten work, in spite of the Minister's former refusal to make payments in aid of materials for less than two hours' teaching a week. The teachers and School Committees between them have raised the needful funds, which the useful work the classes are doing will in future earn. All the kinds of kindergarten work taken up are very popular, and in general they are efficiently taught.

The arrangements the Board has authorised for teaching cookery and wood-work in Auckland and suburbs are most suitable and welcome, and the instruction will doubtless be much appreciated. The needs of the Thames and a few other larger centres will no doubt be provided for in due season, when a number of qualified teachers have been trained at the Auckland special schools.

Most of the Inspectors have made only incidental reference to methods of teaching. A good few of our teachers are young and inexperienced, but most of these are anxious to advance and do their best to improve the efficiency of their work. The case is different with a considerable number of older teachers in charge of schools, who, though honest and hardworking, have not very seriously considered the aims they should keep in view in their teaching, and seem to be unable to adopt and apply with any success the many suggestions for improvement contained in official reports and books on methods recommended by the Inspectors. The inexperienced but zealous young teachers would, I believe, greatly benefit by a brief attendance at a small and inexpensive model school, such as I have for years been vainly urging the Board to establish in the neighbourhood of Auckland. Those with little capacity for improvement we must tolerate, until by the aid of a training college for teachers the supply of well-qualified teachers is increased. In the larger schools generally, and in many of the smaller ones also, good methods, or at the least suitable methods carefully applied, are in daily use. As an instance of indifference to suggestions offered by the Inspectors I may refer to Mr. Grierson's experience in the South-Central district. He there found little attention to the instructions contained in the circular of July, 1900. In most of the small schools the subdivisions of the year's work therein asked for, which have been found of great value to those who have given the system a trial, had not been made out, while programmes of the course of lessons in history, science, and object lessons had rarely been prepared. These facts disclose a spirit of indifference to suggestions that is very unusual in most parts of this education district. One of the chief impediments to progress is the moving about of pupil-teachers from school to school. There is often but little occasion, it seems to me, for these changes, and I would advise the Board to leave pupil-teachers in the positions to which they are first appointed, unless removal is recommended by one of the Inspectors. By acting on some such principle a great deal of friction would be saved.

I more and more doubt the wisdom of restricting teachers to a choice of one or two series of reading-books as second readers. This policy has not originated with the Board, but has been forced on it in the supposed interests of parents' purses. But I cannot believe that any large class of parents would be unwilling to provide a new set of reading-books at reasonable intervals to make the school life of their children brighter and more interesting. After some years' use the upper reading-books, especially in the smaller schools where several classes are taught in the same room, get more or less known to the younger pupils, and when these pass on to them they have lost the savour of novelty and interest that do much to win children to the love of reading. I feel more and more convinced that the Department's policy in this matter is a blunder, and a wrong to the young.

The order and discipline of our schools are in general good, and in many cases excellent. The pupils are nearly always respectful to their teachers, and well-behaved.

In general the fidelity and diligence of the teachers can be highly commended, but what has been recorded above shows that "there are faults and omissions not a few that a little more enthusiasm, a little more thought, and a little more study of their profession," to use Mr. Grierson's words, "would do much to correct and supply." The attention of pupil-teachers to their duties and the large measure of success they attain in the performance of them deserve special acknowledgment.

I have, &c.,

D. PETRIE, M.A., Chief Inspector.

The Secretary, Auckland Education Board.