

own pupils, may be, and no doubt is, right in principle, but when one remembers how many of the teachers have been moulded in routine there is little wonder if methods of instruction are defective. One might linger over this aspect of school-work and point out defects in the preparation of all the class subjects, but it may be better to direct attention to what are perhaps the two most important subjects in the school course, and which, nevertheless, are, on the whole, the worst-taught in the schools. I refer to reading and arithmetic. In the larger schools these subjects are not as well taught as in the smaller schools. The absence of unity of plan and of scientific methods of instruction in the larger schools accounts for a good deal, but sufficient attention is not given to the study of subjects in relation to the children themselves. Too many teachers forget that they have to deal with children, and that to get at their minds they must try to become what they once were themselves. The successful teacher steps down, as it were, into the children's world, and presents his thoughts for acceptance in language such as the children understand. He infuses his spirit of work and of duty into his pupils, and they come to see and to appreciate new truths and new ideals in everything they do. The reading and arithmetic lessons, when properly given, can be made the chief instruments of training in schools when prepared and taught by a skilful teacher. Possibly the most potent of all subjects of instruction is the reading lesson, and yet how mechanical it becomes in the hands of many teachers! Good and intelligent reading is the rarest thing in the schools to-day. The lesson is a hurry. It is the mastery of words without thought, without intelligent appreciation of the beauties contained in words that are passed by as if time itself were too valuable to linger over the subject-matter of a lesson. Imperfect modulation, bad enunciation, and bad emphasis are far too common in the schools, and the defects are allowed to grow till they pass current in the daily converse of children. Much more critical preparation is wanted on the part of teachers, and less hurry—no matter whether the requirements can be compassed in a year, or two, or three; and pupil-teachers must not be intrusted with the principal part of instruction in this subject. When a good lesson is given one loves to linger, as do the pupils themselves, and listen to the teacher who can appreciate more than the mere words in the language of a writer, and who can show how meaning can be expressed by proper stress and phrasing. Thring says, "The value of good reading has never been recognised. Good reading is the first training of the beginner, the last crowning excellence and consummate perfection of the finished master, of all perfected culture. All skill of heart, of head, of lips is summed up in the charmed sound of noble utterance falling with thrilling melody on the souls of those over whom a great reader casts his spell. Reading, again, is the sole giver of words and teacher of word-meaning. . . . The teacher will read and teach his pupils to read. He will rouse the love of thought, inspire the courage, quicken the energy, feed the curiosity, and call out the endurance of the young traveller on the threshold of a new world. Mind is his subject, thought the work to be done."

The processes in arithmetic are often seriously defective. Mere mechanical routine is followed, and the easiest problem becomes a veritable *pons asinorum* to many pupils. The fault rests solely with teachers and their methods of training. They fail in making children realise that in a problem, as in an ordinary mechanical test, something is known and something is unknown, the former being the statement or thing told, the latter a question or thing wanted. The absence of unity of plan in the larger schools, where a strong teacher is sometimes found in one class and a mere routine worker in another, accounts for the weaknesses that so often are to be found in this subject. Dovetailing is the thing wanted, and head masters should arrange the plan of working for the whole school and insist that the spoon-feeding process of instruction shall cease. The smaller schools produce better results in arithmetic than the larger ones, because self-reliance is more fostered in the former and the methods of instruction are more continuous and systematic.

The establishment of a scheme of national scholarships by the Government and the opening of high schools to pupils passing Standard VI. are events worthy of record in connection with the educational work of the past year. It is a pity, as it appears to me, that the examination for National Scholarships should be based upon Standard V. requirements, considering that Standard VI. pupils may compete in the examination. Neither should an age clause limit those of "school age" under the Education Act who should compete for the coveted prizes offered. An allowance of 2 or 3 per cent. of marks for each year a competitor is under the age of fifteen years would meet all difficulties, and would provide a chance to all pupils passing Standard VI. within the "school age." The granting, also, of school scholarships to pupils might easily be managed under the "national scheme," the scholarships being determined by the position of candidates on the result list, just as is proposed for the granting of the Victoria Scholarships. The increase of examinations is disastrous to true educational training, and, whilst hailing the National Scholarship scheme of the Government, I venture to think there is need for simplification in the methods of granting scholarships that are now offered for competition by the Government and the Education Board.

In anticipation of changes in the standard syllabus, much attention has been given to the fostering of classes for the training of teachers in subjects of instruction that will be required under the amended syllabus. Drawing and woodwork have been successfully taught in Napier and Dannevirke in the special classes for teachers. Unfortunately the heavy expense connected with similar classes in Gisborne for the benefit of teachers in Poverty Bay made it impossible to continue them throughout the year, but it is hoped that arrangements will be made to reopen the classes when the Technical School now being built in Gisborne is ready for occupation.

Special classes for technical instruction under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act were carried on in Napier during the winter months with considerable success, but the accommodation is far from satisfactory. The plumbing class is taken in a separate building from that temporarily used as a technical school. The rooms used for instruction in woodwork and in decoration are quite unsuitable, and it is hoped that a new technical school will be provided by the Government to meet the growing needs of Napier and district.