

interest. In some districts of the colony all children are required on examination-day to read unseen tests. Our teachers would do well to practise their children in reading from a strange book. In comprehension the children as a rule answer poorly, and for this in many cases the teacher is to blame. Less thought on the part of the teacher is bestowed on the reading lesson than on any other, and yet if our children are to have a taste for genuine literature the teacher must interest them in the subject. This means preparation. I commend to the notice of teachers a little book by Charles R. Long, M.A., "The Aim and Method of the Reading Lesson." In the Board's office is a number of books kindly sent by the various publishers. These might form the nucleus of a teachers' library.

Spelling and dictation in many schools reaches the mark "Good," and in a well-conducted school there is little fault to be found with this subject.

Writing is not well taught in this district—in fact, in several schools it is not taught at all. Children are found writing one size on the slate, another in the copy-book, and sometimes another in the exercise-book. In one school children attempted upright writing in the copy-books, and sloping writing on their slates and exercise-books. There should be a recognised size for each class, and the pupil must understand what is required of him all through his work. Again and again teachers have been cautioned about attending to correct posture and the proper holding of the pen. A great deal of time is spent in attending to these points in the lower standards, but in the upper standards they are often neglected. As a consequence pupils sit in most unhealthy attitudes, and a great number attempt to write on the side of the pen. Let teachers remember that good writing goes hand-in-hand with good discipline.

Composition in few schools reaches the mark "Good." Not many of our teachers go to the trouble of thinking out a plan of teaching this most important subject. The exercises appear to be chosen in a haphazard fashion, and too little use is made of the reading-book. Yet surely in all our reading lessons there is scope for composition exercise. The oral answering of the pupils, too, is not made so much of as it might be. Our youngest pupils use sentences; crude they may be, but here is the foundation and upon it the thoughtful teacher will always be building.

Arithmetic, although the subject to which the greatest amount of time is given, is still the weakest of the "pass" subjects, and will remain so until more attention is paid to mental arithmetic, or, as some prefer to call it, oral arithmetic. This should in all cases precede the written work. Were this done, and plenty of practice given in concrete examples, teachers would be less surprised at the results furnished by the examination test. To this test teachers must be prepared to find added some simple mental tests, which with the written work will form the basis upon which the arithmetic will be judged.

Of the class subjects grammar is the weakest, and next to it geography. In the latter subject many of our teachers have not yet recognised the utility of beginning to teach the subject from the child's observation. Children can often tell you more about some river in the Old World than they can about the Grey River and its tributaries. It should be obvious to every one that this is the wrong way to go to work. In our own district particularly the materials for successful geographical teaching are close at hand—creeks, rivers, hills, and mountains are close to every school—none is so far away from the sea-coast that the pupils have no opportunity of studying the work of the ocean. The means of transit are every year becoming easier, and teachers themselves must bear the blame if the children's powers of observation are not quickened and developed. Last year teachers were recommended to make their lessons on objects real ones; to let the children know that they have eyes for seeing and hands for handling. To quote from a book recently published: "Before a lesson on roots is given, a large number of roots of common weeds should be pulled up and be examined by the child. He should be asked to say what he sees in the root before he is allowed to see with the teacher's eye; to say what he thinks before he gets the teacher's thought; to suggest his own puzzles about the root before any puzzles are thrust upon him. Then, and not till then, should the orderly lesson be given."

Of the remaining class subjects recitation is the best-taught. Were the comprehension better attended to there should be in many schools little cause for complaint.

Singing is now taken in all the large schools, and in an increasing number of smaller ones. The mark "Excellent" is reserved for those schools which give attention to theory as well as to practice.

Needlework is taught in all schools, and generally with very fair success.

*Sanitation.*—At my examination visits the schools throughout the district have presented a very clean appearance, and generally there has been a certain amount of preparation for examination-day, but at inspection visits such tidiness was not always found. The grants to School Committees are in many cases so small that little or no provision is made for cleaning, and in the smaller schools this work falls upon the teacher and pupils, who regularly sweep the floor. But something more than this is wanted. An annual grant might be made so that during the summer holidays every school might receive a thorough cleaning—what the housewife calls a "spring cleaning." The dust of years accumulated on walls and rafters would thus be removed. The expense would be slight; the health of the children would be improved, and they would have a practical lesson in thorough cleanliness. As pointed out in some of my examination reports, children cannot be expected to have tidy desks if the school cupboards and the teacher's table are not good examples. It is a pity that there is a necessity to report upon such a subject. The outside premises are not always as clean as I would like to see them, and sufficient attention is not paid to the cleanliness of the tank-water. These are matters that should be reported on by the teachers to the School Committees, who in the interests of public health should take immediate action.

It has been my unpleasant duty at my annual visit to have to speak somewhat plainly: to have in several cases to find fault with the work done. To those who think my standard of judgment a