

weekly newspapers contain numbers of views that will prove very helpful in this connection, and even render limited observation at second hand practicable enough. But without suitable pictures the study of all such features—features that pupils can never have seen—must be reckoned of very little value, from the point of view of Course A. I would advise teachers who desire to get a wider view of the topics dealt with in this Course to consult Huxley and Gregory's beautiful and admirably illustrated book on "Physiography." For recognising the more conspicuous stars, and for understanding why the face of the heavens changes from month to month, "Philip's Planisphere" will be found most useful and instructive.

Geography, Course B, and history are now studied with the help of definite suitable Readers in these subjects. The mere reading of the lessons or chapters will not by itself impart a serviceable knowledge of what is to be learnt. While maps, atlases, and pictures should be freely used, the more important topics must be further impressed by questioning, supplementary discussion, and frequent revision. These conditions of satisfactory instruction are not always kept in view.

In the lower classes of nearly all schools nature-study has been taken in hand, in many instances with very encouraging results. It is often intelligently treated, and has certainly aroused a wide and keen interest among pupils. The chief aim of these lessons should be to arouse and develop a spirit of observation and investigation without making a fetish of the gathering of information, which will be a natural concomitant of all fruitful work in this sphere. Both plants and animals should be studied as organisms showing definite activities or functions, and possessing important relations and adaptations to their natural surroundings. Some comparative lessons on such topics as common leaf-forms, flower-types, &c., will not be out of place, but as a rule these parts of organisms should come under review only in considering, on the one hand, their structure as related to their life-activities and functions, and, on the other hand, their adaptations to their environment. It is obvious that it will be peculiarly difficult to form a trustworthy judgment of the value of the work done in nature-study from mere examination of the knowledge gained, for the method by which it has been acquired is a much deeper and more crucial consideration. Its value can be judged to a considerable extent from work seen at times of inspection, and from special inquiry as to methods.

Definite steps have now been taken to begin in country schools a practical and experimental course of study in elementary agriculture. An expert to direct the training of teachers in this department, and to further organize the schemes of work to be undertaken, is soon to be appointed by the Board, and fruitful development may be looked for. I hope that he will also aid us by arranging suggestive courses of lessons in nature-study.

In many schools the old courses of general science have been continued, while in others the work outlined in the syllabus has been taken up. The latter course is avowedly incomplete, and will need to be supplemented. This will be matter for consideration during the coming year. A good deal of satisfactory work has been done in the subject.

In general, moral instruction and health have received a fair amount of attention during the year. It is important that full records of what is done in every class under these heads should be entered in note-books, so that the complete course, spread as it is over several years, may be available for examination. Reviews of work covered in previous classes will be indispensable to efficient instruction.

Some form of handwork is now taught in a large number of the smaller schools, as well as in all the larger ones. The new centres for teaching woodwork and cookery recently opened at the Thames and at Whangarei have been much appreciated in these districts. Closer supervision of pupils travelling by rail to and from some of the centres is urgently needed, and head teachers should make it a point of honour with their pupils to behave quietly and decorously on these journeys. This is a matter that cannot be too strongly impressed on all concerned. The handwork taught in the primer and lower standard classes is in general carefully done, and it is to some extent co-ordinated with drawing. But it is far from easy to judge of its educative value from the occasional lessons and the finished articles seen by the Inspectors, though teachers generally speak favourably of it. Brush drawing, referred to above, is frequently taken up in the Standard I class, and a continuous course of work follows on this beginning.

The work of the primer classes has been good in nearly all the larger schools, and in not a few excellent. In the smaller schools, where the time available for the direct teaching of these classes is necessarily much less, it has been on the whole satisfactory and often creditable. The Board has now authorised the use of several series of Primers and Infant Readers, and I would recommend that the books of the Royal Crown Series be made the principal class-books, the Queen and the Imperial Infant Readers being used to supplement them. These books should be read through only once, revision of lessons being taken weekly or at somewhat longer intervals, and fresh books being taken up successively. This will make the reading more interesting, widen the pupils' vocabulary of easy words, and get rid of the unintentional memorising that often obtains now.

The teaching of number up to twenty is all that is prescribed for the primer classes, though more than this may be, and often is, overtaken. The prominence given to analysing numbers by aid of concrete objects is in every way commendable, but in the smaller schools there is insufficient time for the repeated drill in this kind of exercise that is necessary for firmly fixing the results in the mind, and the learning of addition tables will still be advisable. The simultaneous teaching of the principles of the four first rules, applied to very small numbers, presents grave difficulties where time for practice is limited, and has caused no small perplexity and disappointment to many earnest workers. Mr. Grierison frankly says that "teaching by the concrete alone may succeed in large schools, but it is a delusion and a snare in the smaller schools." The difficulties here noticed we may hope to overcome by better arrangements, but in the meantime it is certain that the primer pupils of our smaller schools have not as ready and accurate a knowledge of the results of addition and subtraction of numbers under twenty