

**GEOGRAPHY.**—With regard to Course A we have little to add to our remarks of last year. The programmes of work submitted to us are as a rule satisfactory as to matter, and intelligently drawn up, but we have still to impress upon teachers the necessity of paying more attention to the instructions in the syllabus “that the subject should be based as far as possible upon the actual observance of natural phenomena by the children.” In the mathematical division of Course A the work has hitherto been of a somewhat feeble nature, but we have much pleasure in welcoming a comprehensive text-book by the Inspector-General which will prove of the greatest assistance to teachers and students in dealing with this rather difficult portion of the subject. In Course B the use of the Geographical Reader alone has not been found altogether satisfactory, and we have found it necessary to require definite programmes, as in the case of Course A.

**NATURE-STUDY AND ELEMENTARY SCIENCE.**—In our junior classes nature-study is finding increasing favour. A truer appreciation of its value, of its living interest to children, and of its higher aims is enabling many of our teachers to rely less on text-books and to work more along their own lines—this much to their own and their pupils’ profit. In many of our infant-rooms we now find the songs, the stories, the drawings, and models all made to centre round the bird, or flower, or insect the little observers have been studying. We need hardly say that co-ordination has its limitations, and these are exceeded when it is no longer purely a means to an end. Elementary agriculture in our country schools now forms the fit and proper complement to the nature-study of the lower standards, though we look forward to the time when the garden takes a more prominent place in the work of the Preparatory classes. The addition of school gardening to the syllabus has entailed a large amount of extra work on country teachers—work willingly undertaken. In the preliminary work of breaking in the ground for school gardens, many committees have rendered invaluable assistance, and we bespeak their further sympathy with the teacher in looking not merely for the husbandman’s return of fat crops, but for a return measured only by the larger interests and wider sympathies of the children. We trust that, as the teachers become accustomed to the school garden and its bearing on school-work, the “Craft and Crop” aspect will not obscure the other and no less important side of this work—viz., its bearing on the mental and moral development of the scholar. To quote Mr. Davies, the agricultural instructor, “A matter not entirely foreign to the subject under notice is the care and beautifying of school grounds. Indeed, in America, a country which is generally credited with being beyond all else practical and utilitarian, this feature occupies a leading place in the rural education programme. Is it too much to hope that as one of the results of nature-study the school may become a source of pride and inspiration to the district?” We are in entire accord with Mr. Davies in this matter, and we can assure teachers that both sympathy and practical assistance will not be wanting in any attempt to further so entirely praiseworthy an object. We are, moreover, the more inclined to give prominence to this subject, as during the past year we have been compelled to report in strong terms on the unsatisfactory condition of certain school grounds and offices. During the year instruction in elementary agriculture was provided for such teachers as could arrange to attend at Greytown from April to June, Masterton from July to October, and at Levin during November and December. A similar class at Pahiatua was arranged for, but had to be abandoned owing to the indisposition of the instructor, Mr. Davies. The obvious difficulties in the way of making a Saturday class successful in such a subject as agriculture and the excessive demands made on the time of the teachers attending have induced the Board to adopt this year a system of arranging for a limited number of selected teachers to go into residence at Greytown for a fortnight at a time.

**PHYSICAL AND MILITARY DRILL.**—Breathing exercises, we are pleased to note, now take a prominent part in the day’s work of the large majority of our schools. The few minutes devoted every morning to physical exercises in the open air is quite in accord with our suggestions of last year about the wider bearing of physical culture on the child’s every-day life. In the matter of military drill we would refer the Board to the report of the Officer Commanding the Public-school Cadets of the Dominion. So far, however, as this Department affects the actual school-work, we have marked it as very good. Though this is hardly the place for a discussion as to whether the attendance of teachers at battalion drill is or is not compulsory, still, speaking entirely from the point of view of the interests of the schools and the cadets, we think that company drill satisfies all reasonable requirements, and so far as our teachers are concerned, it is very properly treated as a compulsory subject. Battalion drill appears to us to stand on an entirely different footing. It has its very necessary place in any national scheme of military training and defence, more especially in the effective training of officers who may be called upon to handle large bodies of men, but its bearing on the training of the individual cadet does not, in our opinion, justify any action that might jeopardize the success of a cadet system which owes so much of its efficiency to the cheerful and voluntary co-operation of our teachers. The question assumed an unpleasant phase during the year, and, as there seemed some doubt as to the interpretation of the regulations, the Department has been approached with a view to replacing the management of the cadets under the sole control of the Board. If this is agreed to, fresh regulations will be framed which will prevent the recurrence of that friction which is invariably the result of dual authority.

**SINGING.**—In one-fifth of the schools Grade 0 singing is marked as below satisfactory, and in a few schools it is not taught. In less than one-half is it marked as “good” or “very good,” and in these schools most of the teachers in the course of their training have had the benefit of instruction from an expert, and many of them had attended the lessons given by Mr. Parker some years ago. This subject we considered of such vital importance in the schools that it was thought advisable to make such arrangements as would enable our teachers again to have the assistance of an expert. The Board therefore asked Mr. Parker to renew his Saturday classes. These were well attended, and thoroughly appreciated by our teachers. In the course of his report Mr. Parker says, “The lessons covered, so far as was possible in the time at my disposal, the whole ground of elementary school teaching, including proper methods of breathing, quality of voice, sight