

One of these is suggested by a previous reference to text-books. For a considerable number of years all school-books used in the primary classes, with the exception of one prescribed series of readers and the arithmetic books, have been supplied by the Board for use in school only. The exceptions are due to the use of the books mentioned in the preparation of home lessons. There has therefore existed in this district a considerable degree of uniformity. The only complaint that has reached the point of expression is from parents removing from one district to another. These demur to the purchase of new sets of school-books. As this question has recently been raised officially, the suggestion is offered that if the selection of text-books is carefully made, uniformity can have little effect on the training of the pupils. It is true that teachers at times complain of the necessity for teaching year after year from the same text-books, but this is unavoidable, as, even if teachers select the books, the objection of parents prevents frequent changes. It follows that, if uniformity is advisable in one district, there can be no objection to uniformity throughout the Dominion, and this would remove all ground of complaint where families remove from one district to another. From the point of view of the total cost to the people of the Dominion, great advantage would result from the provision by the Government of all text-books used in the primary schools. The experience in this district is that books used only in school last for several years, and if, at suitable periods, the series were changed, there would be sufficient opportunity to take advantage of improvements and to afford variety.

Frequent reference has been made in previous reports to the importance of the cultivation in the pupils of powers of observation and ability to describe the result of the exercise of perceptive faculties. Unfortunately, the reason for this insistence is still too common, and the opportunity is taken to emphasize another aspect of the same principle. A correct guide as to the value of the methods adopted in a school is the extent of the voluntary interest displayed by the pupils. When the instruction follows educative lines, the pupils' alacrity and enthusiasm are readily recognised. In the physical exercises this brightness and interest are essential, and ought to be accompanied by voluntary effort to serve their purpose. "So long as exercise gives us pleasure and exhilaration it is doing us good. When we cease to enjoy it, it is either neutral or harmful physically." Further, mental exercises should be accompanied by the same brightness and interest. To secure this, good methods—less routine, more variety—are essential. Every device should be used to render more vivid the mental images suggested by the objects of study. Even inexperienced teachers are known to achieve success in this direction to such an extent that there is an absence of a great contrast in the mental attitude of children on entering and on leaving the schoolroom.

The examination of the Catholic schools indicates laudable efficiency in some schools at least, and fair or satisfactory results in all. In accordance with the provisions of the Act passed during the year, the inspection of these and other private schools that have applied for it will require to be carried out fully in accordance with the regulations applying to public schools.

I have, &c.,

A. J. MORTON, B.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Westland.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Christchurch, 23rd January, 1908.

We have the honour to present our general report on the schools of the district for the year 1907.

The round of inspection and examination of elementary public schools has again been fully accomplished, the instruction given in secondary classes in the nine district high schools has been subjected to careful inquiry and searching tests, and some 1,300 children belonging to fourteen private schools have also been examined. In our annual (or examination) reports on the several schools we have followed the long-established and very desirable practice obtaining in this district. Not only have the tabular forms furnished by the Department for such reports been duly filled, the information these contain has been supplemented by a separate report from the Inspector conveying, in the form of "General Remarks," his impressions with regard to the efficiency of each school, and offering such suggestions as might be deemed likely to benefit either teacher or pupils. To us personally it is becoming evident that in carrying out these duties the margin of spare time for recreation and for recognition of social claims has practically vanished, and that opportunities for general reading and for keeping abreast of modern movements in the field of education are by no means abundant.

The number of schools in operation remains practically unaltered, but we regard with some concern a slight decrease in the enrolment at the dates of examination. The number actually present at the date of the annual visit was found to be nearly 1,300 below that recorded for 1906; the unusual prevalence of epidemics may, however, account for most of the difference here noted. In our last annual report reference was made to the diminished attendance in a large number of rural schools, particularly in localities where settlement has been fairly close for more than a quarter of a century. During the past year a similar decline has been noted in several of the larger city schools. Business premises and factory buildings continue to encroach upon residential areas, and facilities for locomotion encourage city workers, more than in the past, to seek the pleasures and advantages of suburban residence. The growth of population in suburban centres has naturally led to the establishment of new schools, the opening of which has materially affected the attendance in city quarters. To a considerable extent it has, unfortunately, been necessary to duplicate school accommodation; and, however much we may regret the necessity, no other solution of the problem has yet been suggested. Meanwhile our sympathies are extended to those faith-