

a study in English, and that English is the key to the door of every department of the kingdom of knowledge.

Geography bears very heavily on Standard VI, partly because in Standard II to Standard V, though there is observation of facts in plenty, there is little effort made to formulate and memorise brief generalisations of what the facts teach, and partly because much of the mathematical geography prescribed is very difficult to children of thirteen or fourteen years of age. When the syllabus was introduced we expressed the opinion that much of the mathematical geography is too difficult for the children of primary schools, and experience has not tended to modify our judgment. Moreover, it consumes more time than it is worth, and elbows out other departments of geography that are well within the comprehension of the children, and knowledge of which would be of greater value to them as members of an empire that marches with and lives in human relations with nearly every country of the world. What is of worth and interest to them is not "latitude as an angle and an arc," not "arguing the annual revolution of the earth round the sun from the varying position of stars in the northern sky or the Southern Cross from month to month," not "a comparison of inferences derived from" the study of remote terrestrial and celestial phenomena, but the story of the great heritage won for them by the energy and pluck and blood of their fathers. Again, we seem to have forgotten how essential memorising is in the learning of every subject in which expression plays an important part—intelligent memorising, of course, not learning by rote what is unintelligible to the learner. Observe the facts in their relation, formulate the law that expresses this relation, learn the law—in other words, first understand and then commit to memory—that is the way to furnish the mind with something to work with. In what other way can mental content be economically built up and made efficient? Time was when there was too much appeal to the memory; now the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme, and by some it is regarded almost as a crime to appeal to it at all. The modern doctrine that the verbal memory may be disregarded without detriment to mental efficiency is working much mischief in every department of work. To be readily available for use, mental content must be wedded to words; and the more perfect we make the union the greater will be our mental efficiency.

We are glad to be able to report favourably on the work done in most of the school gardens, of which we have sixty-one in full operation, and on much of the work done in elementary science, nature-study, woodwork, cookery, cardboard-work, paper-folding, brushwork, &c. If newspaper correspondents and public speakers would visit the schools and make personal inspection of what is done in these departments of work, and of the manner in which it is done, they would be surprised to see how widely the real school-world differs from what, if we may judge from their words, they imagine it to be. The revelation would, we venture to say, extort from them the confession that the facts do not support their conclusions, and that, after all, we cannot be so much behind their models—America, France, and Germany—as they had fondly imagined. It is not our way to proclaim our doings from the housetop; all the same, they are not unworthy; and that they are not is largely due to the teachers, who have, at great inconvenience and with much labour, utilised to the full every facility provided by the Board to enable them to master the technique of the many kinds of manual work now taught in the schools. They have done wonders, and deserve ungrudging praise.

Freehand drawing is generally good, and so is much of the design-work. If, however, we may take the National Scholarship papers as an indication of what should be achieved in drawing to scale in Standard V, we are bound to conclude that more attention should be given to it in all standards. In many schools drawing is not so fully correlated with other work as is desirable.

In most schools the precepts of hygiene receive due attention, but in not a few practice is often at variance with precept. Example is more potent than precept; and it is a poor compliment to intelligence to preach the virtues of soap and water and duster and broom in rooms the walls and ceiling and furniture of which are loaded with dust and dirt, and the floors of which are swept only twice or thrice a week. Too many of our schools and out-offices are offensively dirty, and few schools are as clean as they should be. We are strongly in favour of such medical inspection of school-children as is advocated by the Chief Health Officer, Dr. Mason, and the District Health Officer, Dr. Ogston, to the latter of whom the teachers of New Zealand are indebted for a very useful pamphlet on school hygiene. If they follow its simple directions they can do much for the children without extraneous aid. They can, for example, test sight and hearing, and take height and chest measurements; and, if they were provided with a weighing-machine, as they ought to be, they could weigh the children at suitable intervals. A record of such measurements made throughout the Dominion and extending over a long course of years would be of inestimable value. Still, there is much they cannot do, partly because of the susceptibilities of parents, but mainly because of lack of skill and knowledge. One of the chief things to determine is the physical and mental fitness of the children to do the work imposed upon them in the schools, and this can be determined only by the medical expert.

We regret to say that few School Committees have yet taken steps to establish school libraries. Many of them every year spend considerable sums of money in picnics and prizes, money that would buy hundreds of volumes of the English classics now published at from sixpence to eighteenpence a volume. The Dunedin and suburban Committees have set a fine example in many things: will they not take the lead in this?

We have, &c.,

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