

portion who failed to obtain the minimum (40 per cent.) for proficiency was not quite so low as last year; 190 were tested in Standard VI, of whom eight were not presented in Standard VI arithmetic, and fifty-six failed to reach the minimum. Notwithstanding the above, the arithmetic in general had improved. Forty schools were satisfactory, as against thirty-four in the previous year. Exercises in mental arithmetic may, with profit, be more frequent, and the simple form of practice usual in shops also requires attention. In several places the arithmetic in Class P was found to halt considerably behind the standard of reading and spelling; easy multiplications were not ready enough; and on occasion the fingers were employed in addition. Some teachers fail in arithmetic through omission to analyse the errors in sums wrongly worked; they are content to mark the sums incorrect.

GEOGRAPHY.—This subject deals with the earth as the home of man. He is all his life swathed round with physical and chemical influences and materials that enter into his being, and largely make his life what it is. Geography Course A deals with external nature as the scene of physical forces that affect him, and the only satisfactory mode of treatment is one that calls observation and experiment into play. The child should go out to see and experiment, or else should experiment in the schoolroom, and also study the pictures showing the effects of natural forces—*e.g.*, the Department has issued a photograph of the Hochstetter Ice-fall; while the child looks at it he may be requested to compare the flow of water with that of oil, of thick oil, of honey, of thick honey, and so he may be brought to conceive a progressive viscosity, and the flow of ice over a steep hill-side. From that to imagining the more gentle flow of a glacier down a valley is only a step. Geography A is capable of much more elaboration than is usually found. Experiment may take various forms—work with the sand-tray, with plasticine, and with other apparatus fitted up as the ingenuity of the teacher may devise, within the limits of the syllabus. This part of geography is not different from nature-study or from science. The part of Geography A dealing with plans and scales is apt to be overlooked; it is necessary to the understanding of a map; so, too, are the methods of enlarging by means of proportional scales. Geography Course B deals with man in some aspects of his history (political, economic, sociological), his activities, and, in general, with his reaction on his environment. We are not yet altogether free from the teacher who sets the children a list of capes to learn. Capes are important for our purpose only if they enter into the lives of human beings: do trade-routes circle there, do any industries centre there, do they directly or indirectly affect the group of human beings assembled in New Zealand? If the answer to questions such as these is in the negative, the cape is unimportant, be it ever so big. And so with any other set of geographical facts. Notwithstanding a good deal of criticism of these tests from some quarters, the teachers have been considerably assisted in interpreting the syllabus by studying the character of the tests set by the Department in English and arithmetic. They may gain somewhat similar assistance by studying the Junior National Scholarship tests in geography. Whatever time is saved from learning useless lists of mountains, rivers, lakes, capes, islands should be given to the study of towns—*i.e.*, collections of people competing with us and affecting our life and trade, or that have attained interest by touching English history. There has been much more practice in quick mapping, but not yet enough. Too many are afraid to use the blackboard; yet the lesson, in its permanent effects, may be made or marred according to the use or non-use of the blackboard. Some teachers will give a lesson from an unsuitable map when they could make a perfectly satisfactory one on the board in two minutes. If the programme in geography be vague, the subject will be well taught only in schools where the teacher is enthusiastic concerning it. Here lies the weakness in dealing with geography only through a Reader or an atlas. At present this subject more than any other discovers the quality and vigour of the teacher. Two or three times the treatment of history and geography decided for or against placing a school in the “good” class.

HISTORY.—The merely reading method and the merely oral method of dealing with history have both proved of little value in respect of permanent impression. They are likely to be still less effective in future, since, as the Wellington Inspectors point out, history is not a compulsory subject for a teacher's certificate. A teacher may take up Latin, Spanish, shorthand, &c.—subjects he does not have to teach—and yet never have studied history and civics, a subject that he is supposed to teach, and to teach in modern ways that postulate much knowledge of history. A teacher who did not select history for his certificate is not likely to be very enthusiastic in the teaching of it, and both the above methods require enthusiasm. When an uncertificated teacher takes up the study of this subject an improved attitude to it is soon visible in the pupils. It is satisfactory to note that, in terms of the grant of free books for Standard IV, Historical Readers will be available in schools of all grades. Younger teachers are sometimes at a loss concerning civics; they should study the syllabus and the interpretation placed on it by the Department in the Junior National Scholarship tests.

DRAWING.—A good many sets of geometric models have been issued, and improvement in model-drawing is expected to result. A teachers' Saturday class was formed, but was poorly attended, although some of the teachers within easy range of the class present unsatisfactory work in this branch. Several who attended found obvious benefit. The class will be continued in 1911, and it is hoped that as many of the younger teachers as possible will take advantage of the facilities offered. Model-drawing should be done in freehand, and not with the ruler.

While most schools present a very fair programme in object-drawing, some of the larger ones continue to exhibit in freehand too close an adherence to conventional figures, without much nature-study, or design, or originality. Where design is attempted it is usually small and finical instead of simple and bold. Drawing is sometimes labelled “nature-study” when it does not by any means merit the name—*e.g.*, no faithful study of a leaf would show the veins crossing the midrib, and very few leaves join their branches at right angles.