

clear that arithmetic and English are, to a greater extent than before, the backbone of our primary course of instruction. As a consequence these subjects have become the almost exclusive factors in determining the right of a pupil to hold the certificate of proficiency. Stress is laid on the urgency of making school life represent the life of the citizen in miniature, so that the teaching of history and civics will rightly bulk more largely in our schools than it has done of late years. The art side of drawing has been emphasized, and the intimate relation of drawing to other forms of handwork brought into clear relief. A series of notes dealing with doubtful or obscure points has already been sent to the teachers, who have been invited to make known their difficulties of the interpretation as they arise.

In connexion with the advancement of educational work in our own district, we have to chronicle the institution of the Board's official publication, the *Leaflet*. Last year two numbers were published, and this year these will be followed by three more. The periodical was kindly received by teachers, some of whom have expressed their appreciation of the work that it sets itself to do. We are indebted to Messrs. Grant, Browne, and Banner, Supervisors of Agricultural Training, for their timely articles. As time goes on we shall look to the teachers to contribute freely, so that the publication may become a medium for the exchange of thought not merely between the Board's officers and teachers, but also between teacher and teacher.

*Medical Inspection.*—The initiation by the Education Department of systematic medical inspection and systematic physical training throughout the Dominion cannot fail to have far-reaching effects on the health of the young people. By the end of the present year every teacher in the Board's service will have had the opportunity of qualifying himself as an instructor in physical drill. The advantages of this will be seen at once, even in the remotest schools. The efforts of the school doctor and the teacher of physical drill, supplemented by the instruction given in health and home science, should react on the homes of the pupils and quicken an interest in the minds of all in everything that pertains to personal health and the sanitation of the home. There is a danger that some of the benefits of this teaching may be lost, unless the teachers set their faces against the formation of objectionable habits on the part of pupils while engaged in school-work. Sitting at desks in a crouched attitude, writing with faces almost in contact with copybooks, holding readers too near or too far from the eye, or in such manner as to make a free and erect position impossible, have hitherto been all too common. It is perhaps fair to assume that the circular on school sanitation recently forwarded to teachers and Committees will do something to stimulate the thought that the first and last thing in education is the health of the child.

*Infant-mistresses.*—At the beginning of last year it was proposed that the infant-mistresses of the larger schools of the district should visit the Central Infants' School, Wanganui, for the purpose of studying under the most favourable circumstances the latest developments in the methods of infant instruction and management. The plan was systematically carried out, with even better results than might have been anticipated. The Inspectors at their annual visits to the schools from which the teachers had been sent found that not only new and better methods had been brought back, but also a better understanding of the tastes, capacities, and management of infants. It would be well if the Board could see its way to invite during the present year another group of infant-mistresses to attend the same school for the same purposes, more especially after Miss Alexander, the mistress of the Central School, returns from Sydney.

*Proficiency Certificates.*—At the close of the year a new method of conducting the proficiency examination was tried, partly by way of experiment. The teachers of all schools of Grade IV and upwards were required to mark the written papers of the pupils before sending them in. As soon as the Inspectors began to overlook the papers with a view to securing some approximation to uniformity it became evident that the standard by which the work had been judged by different teachers varied in a somewhat startling manner. As an experiment the method was worth trying, for it is in the highest degree desirable that in assessing the work of their pupils teachers should have uniform standards of value, and the re-marking of much of the work by the Inspectors will tend in this direction. It is but fair to say that some of the teachers evaluated their pupils' papers with unerring judgment.

*Changes of Teachers.*—We had occasion several times during the year to call attention to the harmful effects that follow the frequent changes of teachers that take place in our smaller schools. A change of teachers at reasonable intervals is not a bad thing, for it may prevent stagnation, despondency, and even downright loss of interest, but frequent changes are almost wholly bad—they are bad for the school, bad for the pupils, and bad for the teachers. There can be no continuity of work, no fair apportionment of responsibility, and but little sympathy between the teachers and the pupils. In the circumstances the best interests of the school and pupils are apt to slip through the fingers of the teachers altogether. In our opinion at least two full years should be spent by teachers in any one position. If a teacher occupies a number of positions in rapid succession it becomes almost impossible to estimate his efficiency at its true worth, and so the interests of the teacher himself may be sacrificed.

*Montessori Methods.*—The educational movement associated with the name of Montessori is perhaps more of an inspiration than the representative of a new method, and this is the highest tribute that can be paid to any educational movement. It may be said also that the system brings into prominence some hitherto neglected factors relating to the development of children, and completes for the present the great movements inaugurated by Pestalozzi and Froebel. That there is a place for the system in our primary schools we do not doubt, especially in the initial stages of infant-teaching and at the critical time when the infants are about to begin the more systematic and formal work of the standard classes.

*English Subjects.*—Some comments on the treatment of the subjects of instruction may now be made. With respect, in the first place, to the English group of studies, we note that many