

Board in furnishing schools with equipment for this branch of work. Grammar, or, as we have become accustomed to call it, formal composition, continues to be very disappointing. The syllabus is not very definite as to what is to be taught, good text-books have been lacking, and consequently the teaching has been anything but thorough. There is here much need for reform. Recitation in not a few schools was very disappointing. Not only were the pieces badly memorized, but little attempt was made to awaken in the pupils any degree of poetic fervour. Knowledge of the structure of the poem, appreciation of the beauties of expression, sympathy with the sentiment were all missing. Even where the reciting was not entirely lacking in colour the artificial quality of the "expression" was only too evident.

Handwork.—[See E.—5, Report on Manual and Technical Instruction.]

Little progress has yet been made in history and civics, and we now see what a mistake it was a few years ago to allow the teaching of these subjects to lapse: it will be some years before the lost ground is retaken. In several schools we had pleasure in commending the method of instilling the responsibilities of citizenship. In these schools a kind of prefect system has been established in the form of a school council of boys and girls, who take upon themselves a share of the government of the school. It was evident to us that the councillors took a keen interest in their duties and enjoyed the feeling of dignity and responsibility it gave them. In one school the duties of the councillors were scheduled and posted up in the main corridor. We feel quite sure that practical civic training of this nature is of far greater value than much of the preaching one hears in school about "the duties of a good citizen." Science and geography are not generally successfully taught subjects. From hardly any aspect does the teaching satisfy us. A well-prepared and well-given oral lesson in either is a rarity. In the former subject, indeed, we feel convinced there is a great deal of shirking. In some schools gardens were neglected as long as possible, and oral lessons frequently of a most worthless character were given in a perfunctory fashion. Again and again we questioned pupils engaged in gardening-work as to the why and the wherefore of what they were doing; in very few cases were good answers forthcoming. And, sad to say, the possession of a beautifully kept school-garden did not necessarily mean that agriculture was well taught. Indeed, in some schools there is a danger of so much attention being given to external appearance—in other words, to what pleases the eye—that the educational use and significance of the garden are almost altogether overlooked. But there is another cause of failure. Both agriculture and geography are taught largely in oral lessons. Unless a teacher can build up his lesson in some sort of logical fashion and skilfully lead his pupils from point to point, from the known to the less known, he will never succeed in securing good "oral response." No subjects in the curriculum lend themselves more to the training of the pupil in common-sense reasoning than do agriculture and geography. It is just here where many teachers fail. They fail to realize how all-important the training of what is popularly known as the intelligence or reasoning faculty really is. Without the power to reason logically of what use to the pupil are the scraps of information he gains at school? The nation owes nothing to the "rule-of-thumb" farmer or to the "rule-of-thumb" artisan. There is still in our schools far too much measuring out of information by doses and too little attention to real mind-training.

We again have pleasure in reporting steady progress in the matter of improved school environment. The number of bare buildings in barren fields gradually grows less, and not a few of the schools have now as pretty surroundings as one could wish for. In several places we found the attention to environment overshadowing and adversely affecting the ordinary school-work, but such lack of balance was not common. Attention to games has increased since the teachers attended the physical instruction camps, and the pupils displayed the greatest interest in the "organized" games taught. Co-operation of this kind in a pleasure-giving occupation cannot fail to foster good-fellowship between teacher and taught, and so aid the former to keep good discipline. The great weakness of the old-time school was the aloofness of the dominie in relation to his pupils, the result being that the latter looked upon him as their natural enemy. The extraordinary outbreaks against discipline that probably all of us witnessed years ago are unheard of now, and this is due mainly, if not altogether, to the intrusion of the teacher's personality into the playground activities of the pupils. There is no better way of getting hold of a troublesome boy than through his love of games.

The work of medical inspection was continued by the special officers in charge, but the field is so vast and the apathy of some teachers such a hindrance that it is impossible yet to gauge the results. In the well-ordered schools, however, we saw enough to convince us of the value of effort in this direction. Many parents are already acting on the advice given by the medical inspector, and if in necessitous cases free treatment were provided incalculable benefit would accrue. It is, however, the importance of medical inspection as affecting school-work that impresses us most. Hitherto the differing physical condition of the pupils has not appreciably affected a teacher's treatment of them; all were forced to toe the same mark and maintain the same pace. Now the teacher finds that certain pupils have physical weaknesses or defects that sufficiently account for lack of progress in school-work.

District High Schools.—[See E.—6, Report on Secondary Education.]

As this is probably the last annual report we shall have the honour to present as servants of the Board we desire to express our thanks for the sympathy and support always given us by all the members, and in particular by the Chairman of the Board. To the ladies and gentlemen whose hospitality in the backblocks and elsewhere we found so welcome we tender our sincere thanks. To the teachers and to the Board's office staff we were indebted for many kindnesses and much appreciated help.

We have, &c.,

T. B. STRONG,
JAS. MILNE,
D. STEWART.

The Chairman, Education Board, Wanganui.