

and the mechanical working, instead of being shown to support the answers arrived at, was often hidden away in obscure corners, or, having been executed on odd scraps of scribbling-paper, was entirely missing. Short methods of working were conspicuously absent from the schemes of work, and too little attention was paid to the demonstration by concrete methods of important arithmetical principles. For example, there are, we think, few teachers who are not satisfied when pupils, who are asked why they divide by twelve to reduce pence to shillings, answer, "Because twelve pence make a shilling," though exactly the same answer satisfies when the question is reversed. It is not until a pupil understands the inwardness of a process that he is able to apply the underlying principle for himself. Hence the very common failure of pupils in solving arithmetical problems: they cannot grasp the elemental underlying principles. The Board, acting on the advice of the Inspectors, has been most liberal in supplying to all schools a sufficiency of apparatus for practical arithmetic; but it is, alas, not an unknown occurrence for the Inspector to find the pint and quart measures and the weighing-machine of greater service in the schoolhouse kitchen than in the school. As in science so in practical arithmetic, there are not a few teachers too indolent to take their teaching outside the cover-boards of the text-book.

In the case of geography we have a never-ending struggle to maintain the practical character of the instruction. Some teachers there are who excel in this branch, and in their classes hardly any additional science instruction is necessary. With the majority, however, the practical side is neglected, and geography of too formal a character favoured. In opposition to this narrow view of the teaching of geography we have set up two aims—viz., the teaching of physical and mathematical geography by practical methods, and the establishment of a close connection between physical geography and what may be called "human" or "industrial" geography.

In the case of history we are glad to record an improvement. The dramatic method of teaching is not entirely ignored, and the importance of the history of the nation as bearing on the rights and duties of a true citizen and true patriot has been kept prominently in view in most of the schools. History, we think, is once more coming into its own.

Handwork and science occupy prominent positions in all but a few remote schools. In the former subject the schools have achieved a satisfactory measure of success; but in the latter we cannot say we are at all satisfied with the position. We have represented to the Board the necessity for greater attention to the primary schools by the Supervisors of Agricultural Instruction, and arrangements have been made to enable these officials to visit the schools more frequently during 1916. The weakness in the science-teaching is due in the main to the teachers' own lack of scientific training. This defect we hope the greater efficiency of the Saturday instruction classes will do much to remove. But the inertia of the teachers themselves, their disinclination to expend the time and effort required to place the instruction in science on a satisfactory footing, is the most difficult obstacle to overcome. We meet with exactly the same difficulty in the case of practical arithmetic and practical geography; to teach these requires effort—more effort than the average teacher is inclined to expend.

*Buildings and Grounds.*—Some very fine school buildings were completed by the Board during 1915, and a successful effort was made to enlarge some of the smaller playgrounds in the towns. In both town and country many of the grounds have been extensively improved and beautified. This is particularly the case in the northern end of the district, where almost all the schools above Grade II have their tennis-courts as well as flower-gardens and experimental plots. In this connection must be mentioned the excellent work done by some of the School Committees, who after years of patient toil now have school-grounds the whole community is proud of. In the towns, but particularly in Wanganui, the schools are well provided with swimming-baths, and instruction in the arts of swimming and life-saving is regularly given.

Throughout the district there are few playgrounds not ample enough for the whole school to engage in properly organized games. Notwithstanding this, and in spite, too, of the fact that the Board's regulations are very definite on the point, we found few schools in which the games were properly organized. The larger schools were the worst sinners, and very rarely were teachers seen taking interest in any of the games except cricket or football. During the physical-drill period, however, organized games of the kind taught at the instruction camps were occasionally substituted for the regular exercises.

*Examinations.*—The number of school-term examinations has been reduced in this district to two, one at the end of June and the other at the beginning of December. The classification of the pupils does not in practice depend entirely on these examinations, but on the quality of the work done by each pupil throughout the year. The question arises as to whether these two examination records are of any real service to teacher or Inspector. We think they are not, for the only reliable means of judging a pupil's capabilities by the method of examination is to have the record of frequent tests spread over long periods. The child is a much more variable quantity than the adult, and hence single examinations or even half-yearly examinations are not to be relied on as a means of measuring the progress of individual pupils. Examinations are, we think, much more reliable when used to gauge the efficiency of the class as a whole.

We have the same fault to find with our Proficiency Examination. It is not an unusual thing to find a S6 pupil fail who during the year has done satisfactory work, and who during the week preceding the examination has passed ordinary S6 tests. We are quite aware that the regulations allow the Inspector to take into consideration the pupil's work during the year; but how often can that be done? Probably a better method of dealing with the difficulty would be to arrange that during the last three months of the year the teacher shall give monthly tests furnished by the Inspectors. A full record of these examinations could be kept, and sent by the teacher to the Inspector at the time of the Proficiency Examination. This plan may appear to savour of over-examination, but as a matter of fact during the latter part of the year every day's work is more or less a test of the pupil's capabilities.