

Singing is still the Cinderella subject of the curriculum. In a large percentage of our schools the subject is badly taught; in some it is not taught at all. Very seldom is there an attempt at imparting systematic instruction on a definite plan, progressive from class to class; the work of Standard I often suffices for Standard VI. In the former class, indeed, the vocal work is often better, for the reason that the spoiling process has not gone so far. There is no reason why almost every class-teacher should not have at least a dozen songs on his list, and in the upper standards there should be at least two part-songs. A lesson of fifteen minutes each day is preferable to one or two long lessons weekly. The excessive use of the piano and of vocal support on the part of the teacher is of doubtful value; it often fosters flat singing by the children. Improvement is urgently needed in this subject; the remedy seems to lie in following in the footsteps of other countries by appointing experts to train our teachers and to supervise the instruction, not only in vocalization but in musical knowledge and appreciation. In schools where the staff possesses a first-class teacher in this subject it would be well if the supervising and perhaps the greater part of the practical work were delegated to him.

Health and Temperance.—These subjects are included in the courses of work in all schools, and are taught, incidentally, when opportunities offer or in special lessons.

THE SERVICE.

During the course of this report we have deemed it desirable to point out for the consideration of teachers what we consider to be weaknesses in the teaching of the different subjects. We desire to express our hearty appreciation of the good work done by teachers, and of their earnest efforts in the cause of education.

TARANAKI.

SCHOOLS.

During the year 1924 there were open in this district 173 public primary schools and sixteen private schools. Of the public schools fourteen were in Grade O. Most of these were in remote areas not near other schools, and consequently we had no opportunity of inspecting any of them. All the schools above Grade O were visited at least once, and the great majority more than once.

In accordance with the Department's arrangements we inspected also nine schools in the Wanganui District, and the Wanganui Inspectors visited seven Taranaki schools.

OUR TEACHERS.

In Taranaki, at the end of 1924, 342 teachers were employed in our public schools. In addition, there were sixty-two pupil-teachers and probationers. Most of the uncertificated teachers improved their examination status during the year; the services of some who did not were dispensed with by the Board.

THE TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION OF TEACHERS.

Throughout the year Saturday classes for the instruction of uncertificated teachers, pupil-teachers, and probationers were conducted regularly at New Plymouth, Stratford, and Hawera. All pupil-teachers and probationers of the first year were required to attend these classes; those that had passed in any subject were freed from a second year's instruction in that subject. The only subject that seems to need greater attention is geometrical drawing. The instructors conducted these classes with interest and zeal, and many of the students attained improved status through examinations. Once again we carried on our plan of grouping our junior teachers in centres for criticism lessons, and again we are bound to express our opinion of the high value of these lessons to the trainees, and of their importance as a factor in developing confidence and teaching-skill. A most successful summer school for uncertificated teachers was held in New Plymouth during the latter part of January.

MEETINGS WITH TEACHERS.

Throughout the year the Senior Inspector met with the teachers at different centres in the district, and laid before them suggestions for securing more efficient service. The establishment of a teachers' library in New Plymouth has supplied a ready and convenient means of circulating professional books and magazines amongst the teachers. In this movement the Board and the Educational Institute showed a fine spirit of co-operation.

ADVANCE IN EDUCATIONAL METHODS.

Our more thoughtful teachers are by their wise reading keeping abreast of progressive movements in education. We should like to see their number steadily increase. We still find in some schools a "speeding up" of the pupils, and a feverish preparation of special display for the Inspector's visit. And after that visit work may go on almost anyhow; the stimulus to secure results is gone. Not a few of our teachers, some in large schools, some in small, are trying experiments in methods of teaching in such subjects as spelling, and writing, and composition, often with happy results. We are glad to find our young teachers from the training college eager to press forward in methods and to acquire skill in dealing with each subject effectively.