

There is but little time for teaching singing, which is, however, satisfactorily taught in a considerable body of schools. Many teach it as a matter of duty rather than from any high appreciation of its humanising influence. Few of our pupils gain the power of reading at sight even simple melodies in the Tonic Sol-fa notation, and the connection of this notation with the old notation is rarely considered. It is desirable that all school song-books should be printed in the dual notation or in both notations side by side. The real obstacle to a better teaching of singing is want of time; but there is nothing to prevent the more frequent use of singing as a change and a mental restorative in the course of other and more wearisome school pursuits, save only indifference on the part of teachers.

Handwork in some form or other is now taken up in a large number of schools, and is generally popular. On the whole it is bringing forth good results. It is especially valuable in the primer classes, where it introduces a pleasant variety of useful employments and has by its attraction helped to keep up a more regular attendance. The opportunities for language-training that it affords might in these classes often be turned to better account. At the manual training centres in the city and suburbs of Auckland the pupils have done highly creditable work, as the Director of Technical Education has publicly testified. This performance speaks well for the general training the pupils have received in the schools.

Needlework is on the whole very satisfactorily taught, but the work done in the public schools will seldom compare either in quantity or in finish with that done at the Roman Catholic schools which the Inspectors visit, though the time given to the subject is generally the same in both classes of schools.

I very much regret that nothing has been done to provide the schools with the apparatus needed for the efficient teaching of nature-study, observational geography, and general and agricultural science as defined in the new syllabus. I have twice brought this matter under the notice of the Board, but no fruitful steps have yet been taken to supply our more urgent needs, such as a barometer, a thermometer (preferably a maximum and minimum one), a strong balance, a mounted magnetic needle, a tray for modelling geographical features, and appliances for weighing and measuring. Teachers cannot be expected to provide these appliances, and the resources of School Committees do not as a rule allow of their doing so, though in some instances they have been making creditable efforts to meet the needs of the schools. There are, doubtless, directions in which the Board could economize in connection with school furniture and school appliances, in order to supply this urgently needed equipment. If educative training is to have that close relation to the ordinary life, experience, and surroundings of the children, which the new syllabus contemplates, the apparatus indicated above will have to be provided with as little delay as possible.

Drill has been greatly retarded in most schools by the long persistent wet weather that prevailed during the latter half of the year. The same cause inflicted on the Inspectors a great deal of hardship cheerfully and uncomplainingly encountered. The way in which pupils turned up at rural examinations, in spite of forbidding weather, affords striking testimony to the value the great mass of the people attach to the schools and the training they impart.

The order and discipline of the schools are in general highly satisfactory. The moral force that secures easy control, and insures steady and earnest application from the pupils, shows itself more widely year by year. The call for repression and driving grows less needful. Still we are far from having attained that smooth and trustful co-operation between pupils and teachers that forms so admirable a feature in American schools. This, indeed, is the feature in school-management that most needs encouragement amongst us. The chief influence working against it is the excessive dependence of pupils on the teachers' assistance; for the mass of our teachers do much more to help pupils over difficulties, and to spare them the healthful effort to think for themselves and to seek their salvation in the resolute exercise of self-help, than is beneficial or in any way necessary. Some even proceed as if their scholars were little empty pitchers waiting to be pumped full of so-called instruction. The ideal we must strive after, by the exercise of severe and habitual self-restraint if need be, is to create in our schools an atmosphere of real friendship and of mutual confidence and helpfulness between teachers and taught. All true and fruitful teaching consists much more in skilful guidance of pupils' efforts, with sparing interposition of the teachers' help, than in clear and forceful instruction, which indeed has its place though in general a subordinate one.

In many directions the influence of the public schools is telling beneficially on the life of the rising generation. Mr. Grierson, not without warrant, writes as follows: "It seems to me a matter for general congratulation that in the countrysides—many of them remote—the influence of the teachers on the manners and general demeanour of their pupils should be so clearly marked and gratifying. During the past year, as in each other year of my work as an Inspector, I have met with unvarying good behaviour, civility, and obedience from pupils in the schools, in the precincts of the school, and wherever I have chanced to meet them." This is largely true of the greater centres also, where other social influences considerably qualify the good effects of the school training. The behaviour of school-children in the railway-trains and probably in other public means of conveyance is not, however, such as teachers can regard with pride or even satisfaction, and I much regret that the authorities in public, private, and advanced schools do not take pains to inform themselves of such ugly and notorious facts, and strenuously exert themselves to secure amelioration. This, I have no doubt, they could with proper exertion do.

The teachers as a body continue to show praiseworthy diligence and in very many cases genuine enthusiasm in their work. To the younger teachers who are creditably conducting so many of the smaller schools, to "the admirable body of mistresses that has grown up in recent years in the larger country schools" (Mr. Grierson), to the head teachers who so efficiently direct the work of our largest schools, and to several of the Inspectors who by addresses and otherwise have helped to break down difficulties in meeting the requirements of the new syllabus, a special word of commendation and encouragement is due from me.

The Secretary, Auckland Education Board.

I have, &c.,

D. PETRIE, M.A., Chief Inspector.