

nature-study turns upon the "working" of what is observed, and the relations to other animals or things. For any worthy work in this subject the making-out of notes and of rough drawings in a special exercise-book should be considered indispensable. I have already suggested that the notes might appear on the right-hand pages of the book, while the drawings, with needful explanations, might appear on the left ones. On the whole I conclude that the teaching here is of a promising character. It is often interesting to the pupils, and I have heard from teachers of cases where pupils are almost never absent on the days when these lessons are due. The head teachers of the larger schools should see that sufficient suitable material is available for this work, and some out-of-door lessons and studies might be more strongly encouraged.

Of the teaching of elementary agriculture and practical work in school gardens most of the Inspectors this year say nothing. I have no reason to think there has been any special improvement in this part of the school-work, but it receives a fair share of time and attention, and, were a definite practicable syllabus available for the guidance of teachers, decided progress would, I think, soon be evident. We badly want, from some one who has proved its practicability, a modest but definite and detailed programme of lessons that would suit the smaller country schools. Is there no teacher in the Dominion able to give us this boon? It can come only from some one who has done the work and has thoroughly tested its practicability. Writing of the N. Central District, Mr. Crowe reports as follows: "This district does not contain very many school gardens. Nature-study and agriculture are not taken up with enthusiasm. This is a pity, for no district in the Auckland Province contains more poor land in proportion to the widely scattered population. The lack of interest displayed by parents and committees is mostly to blame for this state of affairs. I think it is a generous estimate to say that there are altogether a dozen school gardens worthy of the name. It is, however, only fair to add that most of the schools are below Grade 5, and the teachers have not much time to spare from the essential requirements of the syllabus." In connection with this I may point out that "elementary agriculture" is taught as a "school class" subject under the Technical Instruction Act, that a capitation payment is made on account of it, and that one hour a week must be devoted to the instruction. The fact that female teachers, and in many cases new and inexperienced male teachers, are so commonly placed in charge of small schools is, I consider, largely responsible for the want of enthusiasm to which Mr. Crowe draws attention. A great deal of special knowledge is necessary if teachers are to handle this work well, and few women teachers or beginners, I fear, possess it. It could hardly be otherwise. Hence the value of a detailed definite practicable course of work such as I have mentioned above.

Mr. V. W. Jackson, B.A., has for the past three years laboured with great zeal to develop good lines of work in nature-study and elementary agriculture, and has issued, through the Technical Department, a large number of useful and suggestive leaflets on various aspects of these subjects. The preparation and issue of a definite practicable course of work for small schools would perhaps have been of more service than these. In spite of the unavoidable shortness of the special courses of instruction he has been able to give in various districts, and of other serious obstacles, his work has been valuable and in great measure successful.

The instruction given in woodwork is in general efficient, and, as far as I can judge, the instruction given in cookery is also satisfactory. Notes of the simple science lessons given in connection with cookery need to be available for examination when wanted.

The lessons in elementary science (including health) are satisfactorily taught in the larger schools, and good work is being done in a considerable number. In this, as in nature-study and agriculture, the taking of full notes, illustrated by diagrams and drawings, should be considered indispensable in every school. In the smaller schools the lessons in health often leave much to be desired. The need of ventilation to purify the air of rooms can be pressed home better if some simple experiments, showing the effects on the air of breathing and burning, are demonstrated and understood. The action on oils and fats of the alkali contained in soap needs to be demonstrated in the same way. In fact, the aid of suitable experiments should be invoked in this connection as fully as practicable. The way in which infectious diseases are spread about by living germs contained in air, milk, or water, and the method of checking their spread by isolation of patients, by the use of disinfectants, and by cleanly habits, also the utility of vaccination, should be carefully taught in every school.

Considering the short time allowed for it, singing is very fairly taught, and needlework is perhaps satisfactory, though the supervision of needle-holding and methods of work might often be better.

A lively interest is generally taken in physical instruction and military drill. The latter is a great help to discipline. The cadet movement excites no small enthusiasm, and the drill of the companies is highly creditable. Breathing exercises are generally practised on assembling.

I must direct special attention to the way in which the average age of the pupils in the various classes of the schools is increasing. For this district the average ages given in the returns are the true averages of the ages of all the pupils in each of the classes, and not the average of the average ages of the classes in each school. This year the average age has advanced by several months—as many as seven months in Standard VI. This points to this class as the one in which backward pupils are mainly accumulating. Even in the primer classes the average age has for the year advanced five months. It is important that teachers should strenuously endeavour to make progress at this stage more rapid. The all-round advance in the ages is, however, in considerable part only apparent, as in former years the annual examinations, for which the ages were computed, were spread over considerably more than half the year, whereas now they are in nearly all cases computed for some date early in the month of December. In any case there can be no doubt that pupils should be ready for promotion to Standard II before they are, on the average, nine years and nine months old.

With the more liberal staff that is now provided for the larger schools, at least two assistant teachers should be available for the work of the primer classes. The practice of using the services