

ever direction the teacher may wish, and if exactness is demanded and encouraged it will grow into a habit, and become a valuable asset in the national character. In the schools there is quantity without quality, with plenty of teaching and telling, but very little of true training in the art of doing; and these aspects of school life are the outcome of the present regulations. The essential work is hurried in its preparation, and we see no way of improving the present conditions except by a rearrangement of the subjects of instruction.

Hitherto reading has included a special Reader, the *School Journal*, and a Geographical or other Reader; but we propose during the coming year to ask teachers to use the *School Journal* as the literary Reader for all the standard classes, and to recommend Historical and Geographical Readers in addition, so that pupils may obtain a much wider and better acquaintance with these subjects than is possible by mere oral instruction. Reading has certainly suffered of late, but the subject is too important to delegate to the pupil-teacher and junior assistant, and better provision must be made for teaching this and cognate subjects. You, as Chairman of the Board, lately called attention to the bad pronunciation by children in a certain school visited by you. Again and again in our reports has attention been called to the slovenly and imperfect reading in some schools, and, following your expressed opinion, we intend seeing that those competent, or who are assumed to be competent, to teach the subject properly actually do so, instead of delegating the work to a junior assistant or a pupil-teacher.

Writing, the formation of figures, and neatness in arithmetic have suffered of late, as far as quality is concerned, and these defects can only be set down to the hurry and lack of supervision such as was formerly given to this form of preparation.

Singing has shown a marked improvement of late both in method and quality. The Napier Musical and Elocutionary Society, by instituting competitions for large and small school choirs judged by outside musicians, has fostered the teaching of this subject, and inspired emulation among the schools of all grades, so that singing is now receiving the intelligent treatment that it has so long lacked.

As for attention to duty, for hard and diligent work, too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the teachers as a body; but, unfortunately, their environment is such that they quickly become the slaves of routine. Many, indeed, forget that their teaching and training should be mostly suggestive and directive, and that the formation of character, of business habits, of careful observation, and of emulation are among the highest duties of the true teacher over and beyond the merely mechanical preparation of school subjects. The schools are improving as a whole, and, though defects are met with here and there, a comparison between the schools and the teachers of thirty years ago and those of to-day shows that the progress has been great, and, indeed, that much good has been accomplished. But if the schools are to still further advance, we recommend that the following points receive the sympathetic consideration of the Board:—

1. Encourage the extension of the school life up to the fifteenth or sixteenth year.
2. Foster the preparation, among boys and girls alike, of at least one subject of a technical character previous to leaving school.
3. Aim at thoroughness and concentration of effort, and limit the number of subjects to be taken in the higher classes.

As in former years, we are glad to report that the work in the Catholic and other private schools examined by us continues to show considerable improvement, and our visits are welcomed by children and teachers alike. The sacrifices made by the authorities of such schools deserve the fullest sympathy and encouragement.

MILITARY DRILL AND PHYSICAL TRAINING.—We conclude our report by referring to the progress made in physical and military drill throughout the district. Most of the teachers are experts in military matters, and Lieut.-Colonel Hislop, in Napier, and Major Stevenson, in Woodville, with many other officers of standing both north and south, do much to encourage military and physical drill in the schools. In the southern district, with Dannevirke as centre, and in the northern district, with Gisborne as centre, one day a year is set aside for what must be termed a grand military and physical-drill display. Thousands of visitors are present to see what the assembled children from the various schools can do in the way of drill and the various physical and calisthenic exercises.

As for rifle shooting, the school cadets of the Woodville District High School and of Dannevirke North School have gained honours for several years past. Thus, Woodville cadets in 1907 won the "*Weekly Press Challenge Shield*" for competition by cadets in district high schools of the North Island, this being the first year the shield was offered for competition. In 1908 the same school again won the shield, with the record score of 766; and last year they scored 798 out of a possible 840. The shield presented for competition by the National Defence League of Wanganui has just been won by the cadets from the primary department of the same school, who gain, in addition, eight handsome medals. These are worthy records of a good school. The cadets belonging to the Dannevirke North School have also gained honours during the year, and they are encouraged to maintain a high standard of proficiency by the interest which the citizens show in their training.

Altogether, the progress in military drill, calisthenics, and in physical development is very satisfactory throughout the district.

We are, &c.,

H. HILL, Chief Inspector.

J. A. SMITH, Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Hawke's Bay.