

Three schools were not inspected ; one of them began operations late in the year, while two had been closed temporarily at the time visits were made in the district.

GENERAL REMARKS.

In the following paragraphs are set forth our opinions as to the merits of the work done in the various subjects of the curriculum during the year :—

English.—Reading: We consider that a fair amount of progress has been made in this subject. A new series of books has been introduced in the preparatory classes, and the change has been attended with considerable success, the books being admirably suited to the needs of Maori children. The series of miscellaneous readers formerly in use has been discarded, the *School Journal* taking its place, while additional reading-matter is supplied by means of continuous readers, three of which are read in each class during the year. As we have already stated, we hope that during these stirring times teachers will also arrange to have the newspaper read at least once a week in order to stimulate the interest of the pupils in current events. The remarks made in last report in reference to the lack of distinctness apply still in many schools, and we would earnestly draw the attention of teachers to the need for improvement in this, as also in the matter of correct punctuation. There is no excuse for the overrunning of full stops in a prose passage by pupils in standard classes, and with a very little effort on the part of the teacher this fault, which is quite common, should disappear. There is a marked improvement in comprehension of the subject-matter, the children in many schools being quite able to reproduce orally and in written composition the story they have read. The recitation of poetry reaches a satisfactory standard in comparatively few schools, the advantages to be derived from it in connection with the acquisition of the language being apparently lost sight of by the majority of the teachers.

In spelling, a reasonable degree of efficiency is obtained, though confusion of homonymous words still obtains. There are, after all, so few of these that they could be mastered by being taken systematically, one pair being dealt with in each week. Frequently these constitute the only errors in the dictation and composition.

The writing shows, on the whole, commendable progress, the infant classes doing particularly good work.

English still forms the least satisfactory subject, and we cannot help thinking that the work of the upper classes, showing the results of six or seven years' teaching, does not reach the standard that it should. We feel that an English child learning, say, French in a secondary school acquires in such a period a far wider grasp of the language and can use it far more correctly than our Maori children do of English, even though they have the special advantage of hearing it spoken. This is due in a large measure to lack of originality and versatility on the part of the teacher, but absence of preparation of the work and of careful arrangement of schemes explains the failure in other directions. There is not enough correlation between the reading and recitation and the language lessons. For instance, much greater use might be made of the pictures in the infant reading-books, the lessons being acted after being read, while even the nursery rhymes provide very suitable material for realistic English work. Another element of weakness in the treatment of the subject is the monotonous character of the lessons. Children are apt to get tired of always conversing on the same subject, and progress is impossible while the teacher is always going round the same circle. The use of the blackboard in teaching the subject is not so common as it ought to be ; indeed, we are inclined to think that there are schools in which the blackboard is not used at all. The fact that oral composition affords a greater amount of practice than written work does not seem to be realized by most teachers, and we strongly recommend that at least two half-hours per week should be set apart for this purpose, due intimation being given to the pupils of the topics they will be required to discuss. Some notes of lessons in English, prepared by the late Director of Education in Tonga, have been recently placed at our disposal, and we hope to be able to issue them to teachers shortly.

Arithmetic receives, on the whole, satisfactory treatment, and the progress made during the past few years is very encouraging. The infant work will, we are sure, compare very favourably with that done in any of the country schools in the Dominion. The methods of imparting it are generally very satisfactory. Of the standard classes the weakest is undoubtedly Standard V, where the work takes a more practical form and makes a greater demand upon the pupil's power of comprehension. The requirements of the syllabus now include a considerable amount of practical work, especially in connection with mensuration, and no teacher can be held to deal satisfactorily with the subject unless he has afforded the pupils opportunities of carrying out actual measurements. Simple apparatus for the purpose is not difficult to contrive ; the pupils can readily make their own, and learn much in this very act. Our ideas of space and time are to a large extent foreign to Maoris, and, unless the pupils are actually acquainted with the connotation of the terms, they are working more or less in the dark. A good deal of error would be avoided if the pupils were trained to make mentally an approximate calculation or estimation of the result, and the habit of doing this would be of much service to them in after-life. The use of paper in place of slates has led to a considerable improvement in the setting-out of the work. We are glad to note also that several teachers have given practical form to money sums, such as bills of accounts, by making use of account forms as actually used in business. The new series of arithmetics introduced during the year affords teachers a greater variety of examples based upon practical work, and we look therefore for further progress in the subject during the coming year.

Geography and *nature-study* are treated with fair success, although there is a good deal more topography taught than geography in its modern conception. The war has, of course, furnished an important source of topics, which our teachers should by no means overlook. But it seems very