

**ELEMENTARY SCIENCE AND NATURE-STUDY.**—During the year the two Agricultural Inspectors paid 714 visits to 170 schools. The Senior Inspector reports that while definite experimental work had, for various reasons, fallen behind in the schools along the Manawatu line, over a hundred schools in Wairarapa and Marlborough carried out experimental work leading to more advanced treatment for the coming year. The cultivating of trees for school-grounds and for distribution among settlers in the district is a special feature of fourteen schools, and this branch of the work will be developed still more in the future. As to the reproach that little is done in our primary schools in the interests of agricultural pursuits, we would point out that in regard to the treatment of elementary science and nature-study (which include elementary agriculture) the directions of the syllabus are that “the method of instruction is intended to give children the beginnings of scientific method rather than to teach a special science”—“to train children in the careful observation of surrounding objects and phenomena in nature.” In this respect full justice is being done in the primary schools to the interests of agriculture. The special treatment of the subject is the function of a more advanced stage of instruction.

We have again to express our appreciation of the hearty and loyal spirit with which the teachers of the district have worked during the year, and of their earnest endeavour to assist us in the discharge of our duties.

### NELSON.

**INSPECTION.**—With the exception of one or two household schools, all the schools in the district received the usual two visits of inspection during the year.

**EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOLS.**—We are pleased to report a very gratifying improvement in the general efficiency of the schools as a whole. This is due very largely to the better class of teacher now seeking employment in this district, and to the earnest desire shown by most of the older teachers to bring themselves up to date in regard to the aims and methods of teaching. There is, moreover, throughout the district a spirit of work that augurs well for the future. Our reports show that of our own schools 30 per cent. are now good to very good; 39 per cent. are satisfactory; 31 per cent. are not yet satisfactory. As showing how the status of the teachers of this district has risen during the past two and a half years, we may mention that at the end of 1921 there were no less than seventy-six uncertificated teachers employed in our graded schools. To-day there are only thirty-five, many of whom require to pass in only a few subjects to finish their certificates. With a view to assisting and encouraging the teachers to adopt improved methods of work, we continue to assemble and address them in the various centres on the occasion of our regular visits. This, in conjunction with the demonstration work which is regularly done by us during our inspection visits, is having a most gratifying result on the quality of the work of most of our schools. There is still, however, on the part of many teachers a great lack of the study of works on modern educational movements. Indeed, many do not trouble to make themselves conversant even with the “Syllabus of Instruction,” and with the valuable suggestions as to the aims and methods of treatment contained in the appendices thereto. It appears that some of our junior teachers and training-college students have completed their course of training without having made a systematic study of the syllabus (some are quite ignorant of its contents); hence their early efforts at teaching a class or a small school are very disappointing. No teacher can be successful who has not a full knowledge of the scope of the work required in the various classes, as well as a clear conception of the aim and general method of presenting each subject. Such neglect is inexcusable, as is also the failure to keep abreast of the times, not only in method but in knowledge of the subjects taught. Too few of our teachers are students: too many regard the securing of a teacher’s certificate as the happy termination of their studies. In many cases it would be beneficial if the teachers studied again some standard text-book on general methods.

**SCHEMES AND WORK-BOOKS.**—For the purpose of counteracting this tendency on the part of our young teachers to cease to improve their efficiency we are demanding that greater attention be given by them to the drawing-up of schemes of work, and to the preparation of the work-book. In each case models have been prepared by us and sent out to the teachers. In the case of young teachers, permission has been given to adopt the Inspectors’ scheme for the first year, but the work-book must show that the teacher’s knowledge of the subjects taught and of the methods to be adopted are being refreshed and enlarged by recent study. We have frequently found, too, that the regulations contained in the first thirteen pages of the syllabus have not been carried out. Records have not been systematically kept, and returns have been incomplete. The methodical perusal and filing of official circulars, *Gazettes*, and educational periodicals is necessary to the efficient carrying-out of school duties, and their absence often hampers the work of the Inspector.

**EXPERIMENTAL WORK.**—We regret that in a district such as this, where the great majority of schools are small, and are, therefore, held for the most part by young and inexperienced teachers, there is little opportunity for experimental work. In the best of our town schools the headmaster experimented for a term with the Dalton plan, and although at first he was most enthusiastic about its success, his enthusiasm steadily diminished as time went on. He found that while the underlying principles of this method were sound and were valuable in overcoming the undoubted weaknesses of much of our class teaching, the system failed to give general inspiration to the pupils to work earnestly: that while it was well suited to the brighter pupils and to those who possessed sufficient moral force, it failed in the case of others who need to be impelled to work by the driving-power of the teacher. He found that much better results could be obtained by taking a middle course—by grafting on to the old system the principal advantages of the new. The plan was also tried in one