

with supplementary readers of various sorts suitable for children from the P classes upwards, with geographical, historical, and scientific readers, and abridged and full editions of the works of the various standard authors. The movement has caught on most effectively, as is shown by the fact that the subsidy for libraries in this district last year amounted to no less than £300. The effect not only on the reading and spelling, but on the extension of the general knowledge of the pupils, has been most gratifying, and has encouraged us to extend this work as much as possible during the coming year. The reading-lesson, however, is still too seldom correlated with the teaching of composition. A study of good models, first treated as a reading-lesson and then examined as to the arrangement and style, cannot be started too early. Even in the lower classes much can be done by drawing the attention of the pupils to the arrangement of the sentences into paragraphs, and to the use of the more common marks of punctuation. Moreover, there is no reason why the passages set for preparation in dictation should not be models of good English instead of "trashy" pieces whose only recommendation is that they contain a few hard words. Again, plenty of good standard pieces of prose should be committed to memory for recitation. All these methods have been recommended for the improvement of the most important subject on the curriculum—viz., composition.

Composition.—We are pleased to note the great improvement which has been effected in this subject in many of our schools. Instead of the haphazard method of treatment, composition is now being definitely taught, from the lowest standard upwards. There is, however, still need for much more oral and written expression in the treatment of all the subjects. As a method of revision in geography, history, nature-study, &c., long and continuous oral expression should always precede a few paragraphs written carefully and in good style on the lesson taught. This is the surest means of securing impression. The cultivation of the habit of wider reading will unconsciously produce in children a good style, but for a deliberate method of treating this subject we would refer the teachers to Glover's New English Books (George Philip and Son).

Writing and Spelling, which were both weak subjects throughout the district, are now receiving due attention, and the improvement is being reflected in the setting-out of work.

Geography.—The teaching of geography still leaves much to be desired. Too many teachers still think that a knowledge of place-names is a knowledge of geography. They fail to recognize the great change in outlook which has transformed geography from a purely informational subject to one of great intellectual value. While it is still necessary to study the build of a country and to be able to name the chief physical and political features, the influence of the former features and of the climate on the character of the people and the nature of their industries should be treated in a rational way. A study of some of the more modern books on regional geography would materially assist the teachers in approaching this subject in a more intelligent manner.

History, too, although showing a definite advance, is still the worst-taught subject in the school curriculum. As one writer truly says, "The reasons for this are manifold. In the first place, many teachers do not clearly understand what history is, and have uncertain and wavering ideas as to why they teach it." Chronology is confused with history, which is really the recorded development of human society. The unit of study, therefore, is the community and not the individual. The study of the individuals should be used to show how they affected or were affected by the society of the time. From this point of view the study of the life of William the Conqueror, of Stephen Langton, of Shakespeare, of Nelson, of Napoleon, bears a different aspect. Their lives all mark great turning-points in their country's history. An appeal is made not only to the patriotism but to the intelligence of the pupils. The history of the French Revolution provides an intelligent explanation of the present Russian Revolution, and its ultimate result. The fate of Napoleon has its counterpart in that of the Kaiser. Treated in this way history becomes a living thing; but to treat it thus requires wider study on the part of the teacher.

Drawing.—The full syllabus in drawing is attempted in very few of our schools, and with few exceptions the teaching of this subject is not yet satisfactory. Even the work set out for a proficiency certificate falls much below what it should be, and our attempts to raise the standard by setting tests in this examination have as yet met with only partial success.

Arithmetic, although improving, is not a strong subject. The weakness lies chiefly in the poor preparation in mechanical work which has previously been done in the lower parts of the school. The teachers are now working strenuously to remedy this evil, and a steady improvement is confidently anticipated. The improvement in the setting-out of the work is also noticeable in most schools.

We desire to express our appreciation of the excellent manner in which the teachers have responded to our suggestions for the improvement of their schools, to the Board, the Secretary, and the staff for the unfailing support which they have always given us in our efforts to raise the educational standard of the Nelson District.

CANTERBURY.

INSPECTION.—The inspection of schools was carried out on lines very similar to those of previous years. On our first visit we observed the teachers at work, criticized methods, made suggestions, and, where time allowed, took charge of part or the whole of the school. Our second visit was devoted to a large extent to gauging, by oral or written tests, the standard of efficiency reached, teachers at the same time being given opportunities of demonstrating their methods. In connection with the Proficiency Examination we adopted the synchronous method of testing history, geography, drawing, and science, and were very pleased with the results. The preliminary marking of the papers was carried out by the teachers in a most conscientious manner. It was gratifying to find that with very few exceptions their standard was quite satisfactory. This form of test relieved both Inspectors and pupils of considerable strain on examination-day.