

## APPENDIX A.

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st March, 1924.

I have the honour to present my report for the year ended 31st December, 1923.

I propose to report somewhat more briefly than formerly, and to present as addenda to my report the detailed annual reports of the Inspectors of Schools (see Appendix C). A perusal of these shows that the standard of primary education is steadily advancing with the increased number of trained teachers issuing from our four colleges. It has to be remembered, however, that these young teachers are not, and indeed cannot, be fully trained when they leave the training college. It is of the first importance, therefore, that both head teachers and Inspectors should realize this and be ready with sympathetic counsel and kindly criticism. There should be a close bond between the training colleges on the one hand and the schools and the inspectorate on the other. Every Inspector should visit one of the colleges, and the Education Boards could not do better than to allow their head teachers leave for a similar purpose. The training colleges lay the foundation, but we must look to the headmasters and Inspectors to help the student to build up a superstructure of sound educational practice. In New Zealand we look upon this duty as one of the most important the Inspector is called upon to perform. His prime duty is to be a constructive and kindly critic. In this country it has never been thought sufficient for him to judge and to pass on. In general he is as proud as any headmaster of raising the efficiency of a school, and glories in the number of previously untrained teachers who under his advice and direction have reached responsible positions in the service. For work of the kind I have outlined we have too small a staff. In one district each Inspector has to visit about eighty schools, exclusive of private schools. Over the whole Dominion there are 125 teachers per Inspector, or approximately 145 per Inspector if inspected private schools are counted. This is too large a number even if the Inspector did no more than evaluate the efficiency of each teacher; but it is far too great a number to allow of his functioning as he ought in order to satisfy either himself or his teachers. A strengthening of the inspectorial staff is therefore of paramount importance. Higher salaries should be paid to attract to the service the best talent among the head teachers, men who are capable of supplementing the work that is being done in the training colleges. There can, as far as this country is concerned, be no surer way of raising the efficiency of the primary schools than to provide an adequate staff of experts every one of whom is himself an organizing teacher of the highest type.

Though New Zealand is somewhat out of the main stream, yet the modern educational movements are not passing unnoticed. The doctrine of freedom for the child is being preached in the colleges, and is to some extent at least entering the realm of actual teaching practice in the schools. The methods of Dr. Montessori found an enthusiastic reception in at least one district many years since, and now every efficient infant class throughout the Dominion uses, to a greater or less extent, some form of self-educative material. The doctor's method for advanced classes does not appear to have become popular anywhere; but there is no doubt that her work in this direction prepared the way for the Dalton laboratory plan. The latter has found favour with some New Zealand teachers, but so far I have not, in all cases, been particularly impressed with the results. The underlying principle is a sound one, however, and teachers should be encouraged to carry the experiment further. The danger in the Dalton plan of pupils overworking themselves and neglecting outdoor games is obvious to those who have noted with surprise the exceptional keenness with which the pupils pursue their allotted tasks. I feel, too, that it would be a mistake to allow the Dalton plan to displace completely the oral lesson, the inspirational value of which is acknowledged by all skilled teachers.

But the doctrine of freedom has found an even more important expression in the methods that have been designed to train the child in the principles of good citizenship. Every first-class school nowadays does far more than preach "civics": it provides a practical course. The senior pupils are given their share of responsibility in the management of the school, and so, from having actually to grapple with the problems of behaviour and obedience to law and order, they come to realize what must be the basic principles of good government. In a humbler way the younger children, too, play their part, and have simple duties that make for the common weal. Character-training and moral instruction are an inseparable part of any such scheme of instruction, the value of which lies not in the amount of didactic teaching involved, but in living in a well-organized and morally healthy community.

The school environment, too, plays a most important part in the right development of the child. Unfortunately, there are still too many teachers who fail to realize this, and their schoolroom and school-grounds do nothing to develop in the child a love for order and beauty. A good school tone is evidenced, at least in part, by the child's love for and loyalty towards his school. One cannot imagine a bare and ugly school environment stimulating love and loyalty in any one. Excellent work in improving the school and its surroundings has frequently come under my notice, and every credit is due both to School Committees and teachers for their efforts in this direction. I regret, indeed, that the teacher's activities in improving the school environment can no longer be specially and definitely recognized in his grading. The marks are there, certainly, but are indistinguishable from those allotted him for discipline and personality: this absorption of marks for environment was, in my opinion, a mistake.