

these are not inconsistent with the greater breadth and freedom of the more modern methods. This is evident from the somewhat more accurate arithmetic, and from the general neatness of the written work.

With reference to different subjects in the syllabus, we offer the following brief notes:—

*Reading.*—As noted in last year's report, the teaching of reading is improving, inasmuch as the amount of reading is steadily increasing. The number of new school libraries started, and the amount of money spent in adding to others already in existence, is a fair indication that more interest is being taken in the subject, and that teachers are becoming more alive to the value of a wider course of general reading. Oral reading is fairly fluent and expressive, while comprehension is receiving more attention than was formerly given to it. Where either of these phases of reading is weak it is usually found that teachers have failed to recognize that these two kinds of reading—"thought-getting," or comprehension, and oral reading—are quite different, and that each requires definite purposeful teaching. Pupils have to be trained to understand—to get the thoughts from—printed matter of gradually increasing difficulty; and if a class is weak at this it will pay to concentrate on it until considerable improvement is shown. After several weeks spent in this way it will be found that oral reading has also improved even though the pupils have had no practice in it. When satisfactory proficiency in "thought-getting" has been developed it will then pay to concentrate on oral reading. We frequently find that there is a tendency among teachers to underestimate the value of oral reading. It should not be forgotten that it is of immense value as an aid to speech-training, affording one of our best means of cultivating a clear and distinct enunciation and a pleasing, well-modulated voice. It is also of immense value as an aid to literary appreciation, for "what we read silently cannot possess the same value as that which we read aloud." It is high time that more attention was given to this phase of the subject, and that, as early as possible in school life, reading should be regarded rather as the study and interpretation of literature than as a mere mechanical art.

*Recitation.*—Full use is not yet being made of this subject to teach literary appreciation and clear enunciation, many of the poems giving the pupils little opportunity for elocutionary effect. In the senior division one term might be devoted to short gems from English poetry, the beauty of the thought and of the language discussed, and a short outline of the author's life and works given to the pupils. A good exercise is to ask the pupils, after any poem has been dealt with as a whole, to select the finest verse or passage and give their reasons for their selection: thus literary appreciation is encouraged and strengthened. We found that the teachers who enjoyed the instruction in this subject naturally did not limit themselves to the number of lines demanded by the syllabus, but in many other cases the amount memorized was too meagre.

*Spelling.*—The results of various American and English standardized tests set in many of our schools, as well as of the usual type of dictation or spelling tests, go to show that the subject is receiving a satisfactory amount of attention, and that our spelling compares very favourably with that of other countries. Whether these results are arrived at in the most economical way may be open to question. Two points should be noted: (1) Unless supplemented by plenty of word-building and blackboard teaching, the use of an arbitrary list of words, more or less dissociated from the reading-material for the day, will not give good results; (2) however the lists are compiled, there must be plenty of tabulation and revision of mistakes from day to day, regular attention to errors in composition, and a good deal of intensive blackboard teaching.

*Speech-training.*—This is undoubtedly one of the most important subjects in the school syllabus, but so far very little attempt has been made to give systematic training in it. It is very rare indeed to find a comprehensive scheme, or even a good outline scheme, in the subject. The trouble seems to be that very few teachers really know much about it. After the Department's promised manual is published this defect should soon be remedied, but in addition all teachers should study some elementary book on phonetics. "The Pronunciation of English," by Daniel Jones, is an excellent and authoritative little book that will very well repay study; and "A Phonetic Dictionary," by the same author, should be in every school library. Though the average New Zealand speech is probably better than that of most other parts of the Empire, it must be admitted that all is not well. Careless utterance, incorrect vowel sounds, slurred or omitted consonants, are far too common in the everyday speech of most young New-Zealanders. It may be that it is quite natural for young people when speaking rapidly to slur over consonants, but they should at least know what is correct, and be able to use the more pleasing forms that distinguish more than anything else the "educated" from the "uneducated" classes. Everything possible should be done to arouse interest in the subject, to promote good speech habits, and to create a kind of phonetic conscience in the young people of to-day. If English is to become the international language it is most important that it be preserved in its purest and most pleasing form. It is for our schools to take the lead in this matter. A few minutes' practice in all classes before reading-lessons would soon work wonders.

*Oral Composition.*—The special form of speech-training which is often referred to as "oral composition" is another phase of school-work that does not receive the attention that it deserves. One has only to listen to the poor attempts at self-expression made in any public meeting to understand that our school training has in this respect been largely a failure. We have been at great pains to teach children to express their thoughts well in written language, but we have not yet done as much as we can do to train them to speak correctly and with a fair degree of fluency. Oral expression is not to be regarded as a separate subject: it is rather a part of the training in every subject. Story lessons, reading, history, geography, science, and nature-study all afford excellent opportunities for the regular practice in free expression and for developing the power of correct, fluent, and pleasing speech.

*Composition* continues to improve, and now reaches a good standard. There are still some teachers who fail to get the full value of the teaching of English in the quality of their essay-writing;