

astonishing that classes which have gone over the inflections of nouns and pronouns should so misunderstand such a plain technical question as to suppose it to mean the parsing of the words. Other questions on the use or special meaning of the inflections for case, tense, mood, voice, &c., &c., expressed in as simple terms as I could think of, fared little better. Now, these facts, added to what I have seen of instruction in the subject, plainly indicate that in teaching grammar few teachers aim at anything more than routine parsing. The meaning of the terms used, the use and import of the inflections pointed out, and the principles of the subdivision of the parts of speech, are too seldom explained or asked for, so that the technical terms employed in parsing soon cease to convey any definite meaning, and the exercise degenerates into an unprofitable round of meaningless terms and distinctions but half understood. The faults I am complaining of are of a most serious character, and, I fear, cannot easily be got rid of. Many teachers will have to change not only their modes of teaching it, but even their entire conception of the subject. In Standard IV. there has been little reason for regarding even the parsing with satisfaction. Here I have expected good accuracy in pointing out the parts of speech and their subdivisions, and the number, gender, and case of nouns and pronouns; but the subdivisions were generally poorly answered, and the cases almost invariably so. To point out with any accuracy the cases, their simpler and commoner uses must be known, in fact case-syntax must be taught; but as this is in the text-books treated apart from and after the inflections, and many teachers are too ardent admirers of the text-books to dream of deviating from their arrangements, the forms of the case-inflections, and their uses, are not unfrequently separated in an arbitrary and unnatural way in teaching. Throughout the earlier lessons in grammar, I find that the relations of words are not sufficiently dwelt on. That an adjective belongs to or is joined in sense to a noun; that an adverb belongs to or is joined in sense to a verb or an adjective, &c.—these relations, I conceive, are not pointed out with sufficient prominence, or illustrated with sufficient frequency. In the hundreds of exercises I look over every month, those in which any note however brief is taken of these relations would reach a very small total indeed.

Analysis has been better answered than formerly, and the exercises have been much more clearly and methodically written.

Composition has been systematically tested only in the highest, or the two highest, classes of the larger schools. In many cases I have found that no time was given for instruction in it, but the omission has now been generally supplied. I fear that much attention to the subject cannot be looked for until steps are taken to have Standards V. and VI. at least regularly examined in it. This cannot easily be done unless some uniform system of instruction is adopted, which can at the same time be tested by short exercises. At present, a re-production exercise is almost the only way in which composition as taught can be examined, but such exercises are too long to be looked over.

GEOGRAPHY.

This subject remains as unsatisfactory as formerly. In the larger schools, where the work has always been creditable, there has been no falling off, while the tastefully-drawn maps that adorn the exercise-books give evidence of the care and industry with which the study continues to be pursued. Except in rare cases, the acquaintance with the geography of New Zealand continues very defective, and the want of a suitable text-book on this and the Australian Colonies has been widely felt. One of the chief causes of the backwardness of this subject is without doubt the unsuitability of the text-books generally used in teaching it. In fact every year impresses more deeply on my mind the urgent need there is for a General Geography of the World from the New Zealand standpoint. Until this want is suitably supplied little improvement can be expected in rural schools.

SINGING.

In a few of the larger (mostly city) schools singing has been efficiently taught, but in most schools it is not taught at all, and in few do pupils and teachers take a hearty interest in the lessons.

SEWING.

In most schools the needlework is very fairly superintended, and in some I have seen most creditable work. In the larger schools the preparation of the work involves an amount of extra labour on the chief mistress that cannot be permanently borne. I think it would be worth while considering whether special sewing-mistresses should not be appointed in such cases, so as to reduce this extra labour to a minimum.

PHYSICAL SCIENCE AND HISTORY.

Neither of these subjects, prescribed by "The Education Act, 1877," as compulsory branches in the public-school course, has been generally taught in the past. The subjects in science, and the text-books in both science and history, have not yet been fixed. In connection with these subjects I would suggest that instruction in them be confined to Classes V. and VI., where the new subjects might in part replace the ordinary reading lessons. In selecting a text-book on history, I conceive that one dealing in detail with a comparatively short period extending backwards from the present time should alone be sanctioned by the Minister of Education. A perusal of such a book as Collier's "British Empire" is comparatively useless for school children, and only calculated to encourage a dislike to the subject, which may remain through life. Professor Pearson, in his newly-issued exhaustive and able "Report on the State of Public Education in Victoria," thinks that history should be wholly excluded from the elementary school course, and he proposes to introduce it with caution even into the high schools and grammar schools whose establishment he recommends. At page 91, he says, "I do not apprehend much opposition to the proposal that the Greek language and Latin composition should be excluded from our high-school course; but I fear many who have followed me so far will demur to my next suggestion that no history, save the British Empire since 1700, and that of Australia, should be taught in our high schools. Nevertheless I speak on the subject from the result of many years' experience as a teacher, and with very strong convictions. I know it may and will be said that a knowledge of early