

READING.—Sufficient time is allotted to this subject in the schools generally, but there is too frequently a total want of previous preparation of the lesson to be read, alike on the part of the teachers and pupils. There is perhaps no branch of instruction so important and valuable: yet, judged by what we have observed on the occasions of our visits, there is no part of the school work more carelessly and mechanically taught. In far too many instances we might reiterate the faults so often and so fully commented on by Inspectors, and say that the reading is indistinct, expressionless, and the meaning of the passages read but little understood. In the higher standards of some schools the majority of the pupils' reading was intelligent and expressive, and they manifested a good knowledge of the words and allusions occurring in the lessons. As regards the recitations, as a general rule all that can be said is that the children were fairly word perfect, the teachers considering it their duty simply to hear the lines, without in any way attempting to correct errors, explain difficulties, or set before their pupils a good model to imitate. Nearly all teachers pay great attention to the letter *h*, but the final *g* is generally allowed to be cut off with impunity.

SPELLING AND DICTATION.—These subjects are well taught in nearly all schools. We have noticed cases of careless correction, and that no attempt was made to impress the corrections, when made, on the memory of the children.

WRITING.—The penmanship in many schools was very creditable, and the papers handed in by the scholars on examination days were remarkably neat and carefully written. In those schools where the pupils write best, it has been found that in the case of the junior classes frequent use was made of the blackboard for copy-setting, showing the proper formation, height, slope, joinings, &c., of letters. The copybooks are now for the most part neatly kept, and there is almost a total absence of that scribbling on the covers, and indeed throughout the books, so common in previous years. Far greater care is also shown in preventing the carelessness into which children left to themselves during a writing-lesson inevitably fall. Mülhauser's system of teaching writing has been adopted in a few schools, and with marked success.

ARITHMETIC.—The results of examination in arithmetic in Standards I. and II. showed very thorough instruction, the children doing what was required of them with accuracy and rapidity. Considerable attention is evidently paid to the teaching of numeration and notation in these standards. In Standard III. the failures were altogether too numerous, and were largely due to carelessness in taking down the sums from the printed cards. In a large proportion of the schools examined the children either failed to attempt the simple problems set, or worked them in such a way as to show that their teaching had been too mechanical and unintelligent. Too much dependence is placed on books and too little on the laws of mental development. Day after day the questions are put on the blackboard just in the way they are to be worked, and not the slightest attempt is made to make the scholars think or reason for themselves. In order that better results may be attained in Standard IV., it is absolutely necessary that the instruction given in this subject in the lower standard (III.) should be thorough, practical, and, if possible, advanced beyond the requirements, for the gap between the two standards is a very considerable one, and will seriously task the energies of both teacher and pupil. In preparing the questions for Standard IV. we endeavoured to make them practical and adapted to the transactions of daily life. In Standard V. the results were only moderate, and frequently the papers showed an utter inability to apply the knowledge of the rules which had been learned. The same remarks apply generally to Standard VI. Defective teaching in mental arithmetic, particularly in Standards III. and IV., was very common, and in many schools it is neglected altogether. Mental arithmetic, when properly taught, is of great assistance to the instruction in slate arithmetic.

GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION.—The grammar of Standards III. and IV. was satisfactory, the children being fully up to the simple work required of them. The parsing of Standards V. and VI. was fair, but it was very rare to find that analysis had been logically and intelligently taught, except in some of the best town and country schools. Composition receives a fair share of attention, and is mostly creditable. Some teachers, however, seem to think that the only object of a composition exercise is to test the memory of the pupil, and not to strengthen the observing and reasoning faculties.

GEOGRAPHY.—Only passable results are ordinarily obtained under this head in Standards II. and III. There is too much rote teaching in regard to the elements of the subject. The definitions are merely committed to memory, without any attempt at explanation. The children know but little about the geography of their own district, or of the relative positions of the continents, oceans, &c. Some very good work was done in the higher standards, the memory map-drawing being in many cases exceptionally good.

HISTORY.—Except in a very few schools, the answering in this subject was quite as full and accurate as could reasonably be expected.

EXTRA SUBJECTS.—Elementary science is taught in nearly four-fifths of the schools where there is a Fourth Standard, and with improving success. In at least twenty-five schools the answers to the questions set showed a very fair comprehension of the portions of the programme taken up for examination. In about 80 per cent. of the schools visited object lessons are professedly given, but too often the want of previous preparation and the bad methods in use impair the efficiency of the lessons. As given by many teachers, they are quite useless. Many headmasters now carefully revise the notes of object lessons to be given by their pupil-teachers, and where such is the case a considerable amount of accurate and useful information is acquired by the children, while at the same time their observing and reasoning faculties are developed. In some instances the notes of lessons asked for on the day of examination have been found to consist of almost verbatim copies of lessons in some text-book on the subject. Singing and drawing are taught in a fair proportion of the schools. The teaching of singing is evidently popular with the children, and in many schools they sing very nicely. The instruction given in drawing is in many cases of little or no value. Answering in domestic economy varied from fair to very good. Sewing is taught in almost all schools under the Board, and, as far as we are capable of judging, with very fair success.

The registers are generally correctly and neatly kept. In a few instances we had to point out