

pronunciation of the names of places is a matter which should come under notice. I am sorry to find that the newest English books on these subjects are not yet in use. I allude more particularly to the geographical and historical reading-books referred to in my last report. These books present instruction to the young mind from a traveller's or story-teller's point of view, and clothe the dry bones of geography and history with attractive dress. In many schools I notice the use of hand-made outline maps on black calico, setting forth only a few features boldly and clearly. This is a great improvement on the sole use of maps crowded with names and consequently confusing to the minds of learners. In one large school, in which geographical readers had been used in the Second Standard, the comprehension and knowledge of the geographical requirements of that standard were markedly good and much superior to the average work of schools. I have said that the minimum requirements of the standards in most of the subjects, except arithmetic and grammar, are generally fairly met. It is far from being so with the maximum requirements, for not more than two or three in a class of fifty are able to answer correctly all the work set in grammar or arithmetic. Indeed, excellence is a rare quality. Again, few composition exercises are free from serious mistakes, and few children write dictation without errors of spelling. Of course, it can hardly be expected that they should do so, nor do I complain that it is so. But it will be a matter of congratulation if, year by year, more of this excellence is apparent. Some teachers certainly succeed admirably in attaining a high quality of results in one or more subjects and nothing so gladdens the eye of an examiner as to meet with that which is thoroughly educative work in one form at least.

With the view of being useful in the exercise of my duties, I have pointed out what appear to me some of the weak points in the working of the schools. I think, however, there is already so much good work done, that much improvement will appear from year to year if more attention is generally paid to what is technically known as "comprehension" in reading, to the giving of exercises on the use and meanings of words, to setting sums in greater variety with more problems and more fractional work in Standard V., to the teaching of spelling by examples of sets of words rather than by the frequent giving of dictation (examination work), and to the preparation in the next lower standard of some of the work of the more difficult standards. Thus, for instance, in Standard II. the class without any strain would lay a good foundation for Standard III. work, if taught to read stories from English history or if such stories were read to the class by the teacher and a few questions afterwards asked on the narrative. The simpler parts of speech could now be taught, and the construction of simple sentences, with very easy composition exercises on the most familiar things and, with the definitions required in geography the bolder features on the map of the world could be taken. Wherever I have seen the teachers attempt anything of this kind, it has proved very strengthening to the lower class, and an admirable preparation for the higher

THE ANNUAL EXAMINATION-DAY.—Nine out of every ten children on the books attend for examination, the whole number being 6,226 out of 7,050. Most of the absentees are infants, except in a few schools in which the ordinary attendance is bad. I have no reason to be dissatisfied, as a whole, with the attendance of standard children, but, if I found more than two or three standard children absent in any one school, I should be inclined to suspect that they were by no means strong candidates. I am pleased to notice much improvement made in many schools in the preparedness for the work of examination, the pupils being spaced out in alphabetical order with numbers as scheduled, and all requirements being to hand in convenient form. I do not think many children fail to do their best on examination-day. On the contrary, in most cases, the children appear to do better on that day than in ordinary class-work, because they are more on their mettle, and consequently more careful in their work. I notice, however, that, if the teacher is excited or over-anxious, the children catch the infection, and that, on the other hand, a cheerful and self-reliant teacher inspires cheerfulness and hopefulness in his pupils. Again, nervousness is by no means a bad sign in itself, unless it proceeds from fear. Naturally-nervous children are often the best candidates, and they seldom fail. The over-confident are much more likely to do so. One of the surest and at the same time one of the commonest indications of good honest work is the earnestness displayed by a class under examination. On the other hand, in weak classes the children, and often the teachers, reflect the under-teaching of a year in the indifference then displayed. There is yet another matter in connection with the actual work of examination, to which I should call attention. It is the unreasonableness of expecting children to do on the examination-day anything whatever in which they have not been previously practised. And yet this is a very common error. For instance, in some schools children are constantly working on slates, or at most in exercise-books. Periodical examinations are not held, and consequently the children are quite unprepared to use sheets of paper in proper form on examination-day. I recall scores of instances in which children have made ridiculous blunders, because they have not been drilled into method or into habits of observation and attention. I am pleased to state that, in nearly every school, the children present themselves neat and cleanly in person and the classrooms are not unfrequently made pretty and cheerful by bouquets of flowers placed on the tables and mantelpieces. And, at the close of the day when results are declared, although there is naturally considerable anxiety, I notice generally much joy and but little grief.

HOME-LESSONS.—During the past two or three years I have advised teachers to make modifications in the quantity and character of the home-tasks. At the present time, I do not think many children are overworked in this matter. Some teachers continue to set greater value than others on home-lessons, and, as to the simple question of home-work, I do not think the Board should offer any hindrance to teachers employing legitimate and, to them, helpful means of instruction. Teachers, however, are still advised to exercise moderation and discretion, and to give home-work under fair restrictions. Such lessons, in my opinion, should not occupy the duller child more than one hour a day on four days of the week, the lessons should be given on subjects which have been previously well gone over in class, the children should thoroughly understand what is required to be