

teaching becomes most apparent. It is rarely, indeed, that even very simple sentences are thoroughly well parsed throughout; and when, as in Standard VI., the scholars attempt more difficult pieces, they often make such mistakes as show how very little attention has been given to this subject.

The English composition of this year has not been very satisfactory, especially in the higher standards. The papers, while free from gross errors, have been very weak, evincing but little command of language, and mainly characterised by the introduction of irrelevant matter and the constant repetition of the same words and phrases.

Map geography is generally well taught: the scholars are, as a rule, tolerably familiar with the position of important places on the map of the world. I regret to say that the more educative branches of geography—namely, physical and mathematical—are, judging from results, not well taught. Questions on climate and atmospheric phenomena are generally either not answered at all, or in such a manner as to lead one to suppose that the principal facts had been committed to memory from a text-book: in some cases I have recognised the very words used in the little manuals which treat of these matters. It is needless to say that knowledge so acquired is of little value.

In English history the work is in most cases limited to the amount of information contained in the text-books in use. There are more failures in this subject than in any other.

The work done in object-lessons is in too many cases mere book-work: little effort is made to develop the perceptive powers of the children. I find this particularly in questioning a class upon one of the object-lessons given during the year: as long as the questions are direct, and facts only are demanded, the answers are generally correct; but I can seldom get them to give any reason for their belief: they have been told that the object—a piece of chalk, or whatever it may be—has certain qualities, and they merely repeat the names of these qualities. Very little has been done to train the scholars to find out things for themselves. That this is so is somewhat remarkable, for every book that treats of object-teaching lays great stress upon the absolute necessity of eliciting from the children what they know, or can observe, themselves; and unless this is done the lessons are possibly of use for the information they afford, but as a means of training are almost worthless.

In most of the schools lessons are given in some branch of elementary science; but in this, as in the object-lessons, I regret that so much is thought of books and so little of experiment. There are, of course, exceptions, but I am often met with the remark, "I can't afford to purchase apparatus." It seems useless to tell these teachers that, at all events as regards very many of the experiments to be shown, very rough appliances indeed will suffice. I have a lingering suspicion, however, that the causes of the lack of zeal on the part of teachers in this subject are not to be found altogether in the want of knowledge or fear of expense, but in the dread that the time devoted to science teaching will not "tell" at the examination for standards. In vain have I asserted that, where object-lessons and elementary science are properly taught, the other subjects are also good; my remarks are received with courtesy and manifest incredulity: they cannot believe that they will find their account in the increased intelligence of their pupils. To those who question the practical utility of science teaching in elementary schools I will quote what Professor Huxley says: "Now, the value of a knowledge of physical science as a means of getting on is indubitable. There are hardly any of our trades, except the merely huckstering ones, in which some knowledge of science may not be directly profitable to the pursuer of that occupation. As industry attains higher stages of its development, as its processes become more complicated and refined, and competition more keen, the sciences are dragged in one by one to take their share in the fray; and he who can best avail himself of their help is the man who will come out uppermost in that struggle for existence which goes on as fiercely beneath the smooth surface of modern society as among the wild inhabitants of the woods."

Instruction in drawing is given with very fair results in the town and larger schools; in the smaller schools the teaching of this very important subject is, I am afraid, too much neglected. As in the science lessons, it has, I think, been supposed not to "pay;" but now that marks are to be awarded it is probable that some improvement will take place.

Singing is very generally taught. In the drill and gymnastic exercises the chief fault in the smaller schools, where they have not the advantage of a professional instructor, is want of precision.

Of the discipline and behaviour of the children attending our schools I can speak favourably. It is very seldom indeed that I have to report the discipline of a school as "bad."

In the two district high schools examined by me quite as much work, although of an elementary kind, has been done as could reasonably be expected. It is not likely that young people who are at the same time striving to pass in the higher standards and working hard for a scholarship will make very rapid progress in French, Latin, and mathematics, the time devoted to these subjects being necessarily very limited.

I have been much surprised at the large number of children absent on the day of examination. Taking the roll-numbers of the schools I have examined, I find that more than 10 per cent. were absent, although ample notice is always given. Various causes are assigned—"Sickness," "Kept at home to work," &c. I make no remark on this; but I shall be curious to see whether reckoning the percentage of passes on the roll-number, instead of, as hitherto, on the number actually examined, will cause any alteration in this respect.

My work during the past year having been almost entirely devoted to the standard examinations, I have not in this report dwelt much upon the methods of instruction pursued by our teachers, except in so far as they came under my notice at the examinations. I am, however, convinced that most of the inferior results are caused by the neglect of steady systematic teaching, and by the apparent inability of some teachers to make the most of the material at their command.