

*Grammar.*—This heading in the examination schedule includes composition as well as formal grammar. On the whole, questions in formal grammar were well answered. Composition, however, suffers greatly from want of methodical treatment; and for this there is no excuse. Several excellent manuals on the subject have recently been published. Mr. Park's "Lessons on Composition," and Dr. Abbott's "How to Write clearly," would well repay careful study. They are in general use as text-books in two at least of the education districts of New Zealand, where the results in composition are very satisfactory.

*Geography.*—There is little to say in favour of the instruction in this subject. It is generally too verbal, and not real enough. Too little use is made of maps and diagrams; too much faith is put in rote work. My examination of Standard II. showed how very worthless such teaching can become. The syllabus defines the work of this standard to be, "Knowledge of the meaning of a ground plan, and of a map; of the principal geographical terms; and of the positions of the continents, oceans, and larger seas." In the schools which came first on my list for examination, the pupils, with rare exceptions, were perfect in the verbal part of the work. They could repeat with great readiness the definitions of common geographical terms, or tell the positions of the continents, &c. But this was literally the extent of their knowledge of the subject. When taken before a map of the world or an outline map on the blackboard, they failed *en masse* to recognise a cape, strait, island, &c. When asked to point to Asia, it was an even chance that any one of them would point to Africa. They had learned the subject by rote; they had not the remotest conception of the real thing. The realistic instruction so necessary in giving the preliminary explanations of such notions as land and water, mountain and plain, &c., had been entirely neglected, and no attempt had been made to cultivate the children's powers of observation, comparison, and grouping. Thus, all that is educative in the subject had been lost sight of. Towards the end of the year, however, it was gratifying to observe a steady improvement in the results.

*History.*—But little useful progress has been made in the study of history. The knowledge acquired is too often of a meagre and valueless kind. Dry summaries, lists of battles and of the dates of the accession and death of sovereigns are committed to memory for the purposes of examination, and forgotten before the child has been a week from school. This is almost invariably the case with the pupils of Standards III. and IV., and the teacher is not altogether to blame. It is impossible for him to prepare children so young for the ordeal of an examination in history without having recourse, more or less, to cram. The change effected by the new regulations in excluding history from the list of pass subjects will afford a considerable measure of relief, and it is to be hoped that a further advance in this direction will be made at no distant date. Nothing but good could result from the exemption of the Third and Fourth Standards from examination in this subject. A history book, such, for instance, as Mr. Gardiner's "Outline," might then be introduced as a reading book in these classes. Each class would have two reading books instead of one as at present, and the Inspector in applying the test for reading would use one or both of them. There would be no further need for cramming the children with dry summaries and catalogues of names and dates, and thus a most fruitful source of repugnance to the subject would be removed from the path of the young. I would not have it understood that I am here speaking against history as a branch of education. Indeed, under proper conditions it is more than any other subject fitted to arouse the interest, even the enthusiasm, of the child. But what I do mean to say is this: that history as at present taught in the elementary schools, with a view to examination, creates in the ordinary child a feeling of disgust for the subject which will, in all probability, endure with him for a lifetime.

*Extra Subjects.*—An effort has been made to teach science in nearly all the schools, but in only a few are the results at all satisfactory. The great majority of teachers have little knowledge of the science subjects themselves, and, besides, they are not supplied with even the most rudimentary apparatus. The instruction is therefore entirely limited to learning by rote, and it should scarcely be necessary to state that any attempt to teach science without illustration and experiment is certain to result in complete failure. In my opinion, many of our teachers would be better employed were they to devote the science hour to a careful study of some piece of English prose or verse; and I think it is much to be regretted that this alternative is not allowed them. The instruction in object lessons is very varied. In a few schools exercise-books containing notes of lessons were submitted on the day of examination. These lessons were for the most part suitable in matter and arrangement, and, judged by the answering, they had been taught with care and intelligence. In many schools, however, no notes were kept, and only some seven or eight lessons in all had been given. I had again and again to point out that when the time-table allows for one lesson a week it is not too much to expect that about thirty should be given during the year. Also, no matter how skilful a teacher may be, he cannot afford to dispense with notes; and with these before him, an Inspector is better able to form an estimate of the value of the instruction in the subject. In a very large proportion of schools poetry has been taught with very poor effect. The children had generally got the words of the poems well by heart, but anything more wearisome than the repetition of them I cannot imagine. Questions on the subject-matter were most frequently left unanswered; sometimes they elicited startling guesses. On one occasion I asked a class that had just repeated Mrs. Hemans's "Better Land" what was meant by the "Better Land." The answers ranged the world over, "from China to Peru." Singing is mostly taught by ear. In a few of the largest schools instruction is also given by note, and, on the whole, with satisfactory results. Music drill is a very pleasing feature of most infant-schools. I should fancy no better corrective to ordinary routine could be found. In twenty-seven small schools singing is not taught. A due amount of attention is bestowed on needlework, and the results are in many cases very creditable. In a few instances rather poor specimens of work were exhibited; but these were generally accounted for by special difficulties in providing the children with suitable materials.

In conclusion I may remark that I have seldom had to complain of the behaviour of the children. In a few schools the work of examination was hindered by laxity of control, and extra precautions against talking and copying had to be taken. But this is the exception. As a rule the children are