

III., IV., V., and VI. In the larger schools moderate results were obtained; in the smaller, knowledge of the subject was meagre and ideas were confused. Standard V. I generally found to be the best-prepared class, and Standard III. or Standard VI. the worst. I certainly think that history should be omitted from the work of Standard III. In Standard VI. it is important that pupils should understand something about the government and constitution under which they live; but at examination the answers in this connection were generally very ridiculous. One pupil at Wanganui, for example, wrote an elaborate treatise upon the heavy rainfall on the west coast of the South Island in answer to a question on the Constitution of New Zealand. As Mr. Fitch points out, it is absurd to find children prating about the Feudal System, or about the Constitutions of Clarendon, and yet not knowing how our Parliament is constituted, and what are its duties and functions. I am, however, inclined to the opinion that in schools officered by only one teacher, in order to give more time for reading, history might well be an optional subject, or it should be treated only in reading lessons from an historical reader.

EXTRA SUBJECTS.—*Science.*—So far from any progress having been made in science, the time devoted to it was at most schools merely wasted. And for this there are many causes, not the least of which is the extended nature of the syllabus. I think if the science at present laid down were subdivided into several divisions, each division to count one subject, and each with a clearly-defined syllabus, some satisfactory results might be produced in the larger schools. Science certainly ought to be retained in the syllabus, but I think it should be optional, not compulsory. There can be no doubt that there is little use in having it compulsory in a small bush school, with from, say, four to eight pupils in the higher standards, and with one teacher, who, unaided, has to teach all classes, and who himself has little knowledge of, and no taste for, the subject. I should like to see drawing, physics, physiology, agricultural chemistry, botany, history, needlework, &c., classed as extra subjects, some of which would be compulsory and some optional. Then, in all schools—except, perhaps, those with only one teacher—one optional subject (or more, according to the staff and the class of the school) would have to be taught; but the choice of the subject would be left with the teacher, who could then select whatever one was most congenial to his tastes. Of science-teaching as a valuable educative and disciplinary power I have a high opinion—to say nothing of the value which acquaintance with some of the branches of science possesses from a utilitarian point of view; but I object to give my assistance to carrying out shams, and the attempted teaching of science in the class of small bush schools already mentioned is a decided sham. But even at some of the largest schools, where teachers took an interest in science, the answering was poor. This, I think, was partly the result of so little time having been given to the subject, and partly because pupils were told too much and were not led to investigate and discover for themselves. And for the latter reason in the preceding sentence object lessons do not exercise the useful influence they might with better handling. Of what use, for instance, is an object lesson on the “pin” if pupils are told why a pin is rounded, why it is pointed, why it has a head, &c., as I once heard at a school, in place of the reason for each being educed by means of experimental illustrations. In these lessons several teachers start with the idea that children know many things of which they are in reality ignorant, and, in consequence, many of the properties of a body are not educed. Questions, too, are put in such a manner that no thought is required to answer them—*e.g.*, “Is it rough or smooth?” “Is it a curved or a flat surface?” Such subjects might frequently be treated as would admit not only of the pupils seeing them, but also of each pupil handling them throughout the lesson—*e.g.*, stalk of wheat, stalk of oats, wool, different coloured strings, &c. I would recommend all teachers to read Mr. Rick’s book on object lessons.

Recitation.—In some schools pupils recited very nicely, but I am afraid I must say such schools were rather the exception, for sing-song was very prevalent. That the piece should be thoroughly understood is absolutely necessary before good recitation can be obtained, and this was seldom the case. The learning and reciting of poetry may be made a valuable means of cultivating the imagination, improving the delivery, and extending the vocabulary.

Subject-matter of Reading-lessons.—In this subject I very rarely could give even half the possible marks. Sometimes pupils could substitute one word for another, but often even this was beyond them. Now, while it is very desirable that pupils should know the meanings of words, something of a higher intellectual value is required. Teachers should endeavour to get their pupils to express in statements, in their own words and of their own making, the meanings of passages. The very common habit of jerking out disconnected words in answer to oral questions I consider to be one of the worst in our schools. Written composition would be much benefited if children were trained to express themselves well at all times in answer to oral questions. In a special report on “Education on the Continent” Mr. Matthew Arnold pointed out that the schools in Germany, France, and Switzerland struck him as being superior to the English schools especially in this: that the teachers in those countries took more pains than the teachers in England to make the children sure of their ground, and to train them to answer in a finished manner oral questions put to them in any and every subject of the school course. “A child,” he says, “is apt to answer a question by a single word, or a word or two, and the questioner is apt to fill in the answer in his own mind and to accept it. But in Germany it is a regular exercise for children to be made to give their answers complete, and the discipline in accuracy and collectedness which is thus obtained is very valuable.”

Needlework is generally well taught at all schools where female assistants are employed.

Drawing as a pass subject in Standard I. and Standard II. was very fair in many schools; but there were some bad exceptions, where the books were very dirty, and where little had been done during the year, and that little did not show any real teaching or supervision. The work in these lower classes was often better in the small schools than in the large ones. In the remaining classes drawing has been taught in all schools as a class subject, but not, as a rule, in the advanced books. I am now convinced that as a pass subject in the upper standards drawing never can be a success,