

Very easy questions set on such matters as government, banking, &c., are almost universally avoided. Probably teachers are discouraged by the wide scope and vague limits of the subject, which may deprive their efforts of due recognition. To give the necessary definiteness a book has been wanted of some such nature as that in general use in the schools of South Australia; and in lieu of one specially prepared for our school purposes, and limited to them, Mr. J. H. Pope's "The State," recently issued from the Government Printing Office, is recommended to the notice of teachers. The following extract from Mr. Pope's very modest preface may not be out of place: "As all the chapters of the book have been constructed on skeletons, it is very likely that most of them are in a convenient form for use as notes of lessons on social science subjects. Probably a perusal of Chapters XIII.—XVI., for instance, would give a teacher who had never made such subjects a study the framework for a series of suitable lessons on exchange, money, banks, and business. Similarly, a brief study of Chapters XXIX.—XXXII. would yield a teacher a series of easily manageable lessons on the government of New Zealand." The history of S5 and S4 is not satisfactory, and seems to us to show a distinct drop from a past record of little merit. In S3, however, an improvement is to be noted in the character which the teaching occasionally assumes. Freed from the compulsion of driving a few unattractive facts into the head of every child, teachers have been more disposed to adopt a less uninteresting mode of treatment, and, if the many show evidence of no benefit, appreciative children are frequently found to take an interest in the subject, and to make intelligent answering. Two dangers, however, are to be pointed out—the danger of omitting to fix a story in its proper historical setting, without which its character as history is destroyed; and the ordinary one of not having due regard to a fair distribution of the knowledge, a danger incident to history in a greater degree than other class subjects.

*Geography.*—The geography of S2 well maintains the position reached in the previous year. In S4 we are afraid it is rather more clearly evident that the inclusion of the subject in the class group is often taken as an excuse for slovenly teaching. The maps of New Zealand are the best part of the work; yet even in this respect the interpretation of the "rough maps" of the syllabus with an emphasis on the adjective is much too common. The higher classes (in which geography is a pass subject) deserve credit for a little improvement in defining the position of places. In their mapping something better is demanded than rude outlines or sketches. We rarely get it.

Much more advantage has this year been taken of the permission to group S4 and S5 together for history and geography.

*Science and Object Lessons.*—The improvement in object lessons is of this nature principally: that they are more generally given as a regular part of the school course. Notes of lessons are also very generally kept, and the experimental treatment of science has been extended by the Board's grant of a goodly number of cheap sets of apparatus. We can say with confidence that in the larger schools the work done possesses considerable value; but in the vast majority of cases neither the object lessons nor the science lessons are of a character to give the children a deeper interest in the objects that surround them, or to improve their observing or reasoning powers, and the benefit is certainly not appreciable in the trifling information imparted. The teacher who, from want of time or skill, cannot treat the subject successfully, would be better employed in making up defects in other subjects; and, if the regulations permitted, we should willingly, in single-handed schools, forego the advantages which science and object lessons are supposed to give, and trust to the necessary conditions of living and to newspapers for an equivalent.

*ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.*—The change of most moment in the additional subjects has been the entire disappearance of marks lower than five for repetition of poetry, sewing, and subject matter. In most of the schools drill has been examined, and the marks embodied in our reports have been assigned by Mr Walker, the Board's Gymnastic and Drill Inspector. The averages of the separate subjects are: Poetry, 12.3 for 152 schools; drill, 11.7 for 144 schools; singing, 10.4 for 121 schools; sewing, 13.7 for 146 schools; subject matter, 11.7 for 152 schools; and extra drawing, 8.3 for 3 schools. The average of the "additional marks" for the district is 57, as against 54.2 for last year.

*INTERPRETATION OF REGULATIONS.*—In conducting the inspection and examination of schools we have, to the best of our belief, followed the gazetted regulations as closely as Inspectors have done elsewhere. Yet there is one very important particular in which it has seemed impossible for us, with any regard to the interests of our schools, to carry out what is clearly the intention of the framers, and we are supported in our opinion by the practice of at least one other large education district. We refer to the second half of Regulation 7 of Section IV., the whole of which reads as follows: "In order to obtain a pass, a pupil must be present in class during the examination in the class subjects for a standard which he has not already passed, and must satisfy the Inspector in all the pass subjects for the same standard: except that failure in one subject (unless very serious) may be overlooked if in the judgment of the Inspector it is due to some individual peculiarity, and is not the result of the pupil's negligence or of ineffective teaching." This regulation evidently contemplates in the first place that in no case shall a pass be granted if there has been a serious failure in any of the pass subjects, and next that the cases in which a pupil is allowed to pass with a simple failure in any subject shall be exceptional. We may as well confess at once that we have practically turned the exceptional cases into the rule, and taken shelter under the fiction that in every case "failure in one subject (unless very serious)" "is due to some individual peculiarity, and is not the result of the pupil's negligence or of ineffective teaching." We have, further, given an extraordinarily lenient interpretation to "serious failure" in all but the two most important subjects. The general result is, therefore, substantially that the pupils have been passed up with one failure unless that were a serious one in either reading or arithmetic, and we are curious to know what standard of attainment would permit a fair proportion to advance from class to class yearly under a much stricter arrangement. It is not a pleasant thing to feel compelled to evade the spirit of a regulation which we are under some obligation to obey, and we hope that this plain statement of the action we have taken will direct attention to the matter and lead to a revisal. In dealing with the case it