

comings of the scholars, I intend using a stricter test next year, the application of which will probably land in disaster those who persist in using the old-fashioned methods that are demonstrably a failure.

WRITING.—There is a moderate improvement in the copybooks this year, though the number of schools in which I can speak of the handwriting in terms of unqualified approval does not, even yet, exceed half a dozen. The old rule-of-thumb methods are still generally practised, to the exclusion of either blackboard teaching or the simultaneous lesson. The attempt to teach children to sit properly when they are writing, or even to hold their pens rightly, would seem to have been tacitly abandoned by common consent, as being a "counsel of perfection."

ARITHMETIC.—This subject is more thoroughly taught than any other in the school course. The methods followed are usually good, and the success with which the scholars grapple with the problems set them shows that they have been trained to think out questions for themselves, and that they have got quite beyond the stage of mere rote-work.

GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION.—Few, even of the more advanced scholars, can answer satisfactorily questions involving some knowledge of syntax, apparently thinking that they have done enough when they have analysed and parsed a simple sentence. An alteration in the customary form of examination paper will be necessary, so that some knowledge of idioms and contractions will be made a future condition of success. In letter-writing insufficient attention is being paid to the proper forms of address and subscription—both important matters.

GEOGRAPHY.—Although I have formerly referred to geography as a subordinate branch of an education, it must not be inferred that it can be allowed to drop almost out of sight. Dreading to bring back the practice of those not very distant times when the unfortunate children wasted many hours, that might have been better employed, in committing to memory the names of the counties and county towns of Great Britain and Ireland, I have usually restricted the scope of my examinations to general questions. But the sorry answers that have been given this year by many of the older pupils, when they were required to "name the six Great Powers," or to say "what States compose the German Empire," do not create a very favourable impression as to the quality of the teaching given.

HISTORY does not seem to be sufficiently brought into connection with the kindred subject, geography. Questions as to the historical importance of several well-known places are too often left unanswered, the force of association having evidently not been brought into play. Instead of the stiff and wholly uninteresting methods of teaching history usually pursued, it would be far better if history and geography were largely taught concurrently. Each would wonderfully help the other.

DRAWING is very fairly taught in the majority of schools—exceedingly well taught in a few.

NEEDLEWORK—in judging which I have availed myself, whenever it was possible, of the willingly-rendered help of lady examiners—appears to get quite its due share of attention as a rule, although in a few schools the time allowed for teaching it is obviously too short.

I am still very favourably impressed with the general tone and discipline of the Marlborough schools. Without an approach to harshness, the scholars are usually trained to habits of prompt and cheerful obedience, and appear to retain those mingled feelings of respect and liking for their teachers without which no school can be said to be in a healthy state.

The matter of supplying the children cheaply and regularly with books through the agency of the Board has advanced another step. A small supply of books has arrived from England, and is now being distributed as far as it will go. But unless a periodical and ample supply is kept up it would have been better if this system had never been begun, regularity of supply being the very essence of the plan.

The multiplicity of subjects included in our school course has for years afforded our teachers a stock complaint, and a stock excuse for all shortcomings. But a compendious way of getting over this difficulty has lately been widely adopted, which cannot be tolerated. Many—indeed, it may be fairly said nearly all—the Marlborough teachers are beginning to treat the syllabus in an eclectic fashion, simply omitting such portions as they, in their wisdom, may deem it comparatively useless, or, it may be, inconvenient, to teach. Singing by note, for instance, now so generally and efficiently taught in other districts, has here almost dropped out of the school course. Drill is in most cases either taught very imperfectly or not at all. Elementary science, though clearly a part of the work prescribed for the Fourth Standard, has been quietly abandoned in that numerous and important class. History is being gradually elbowed out in a similar way. All this is founded on a preposterous misconception of the powers and duties of teachers. It ought not, by this time, to be necessary to point out that it does not rest with either teachers or Inspectors to pick and choose in this easy-going fashion. Whatever one's private opinion may be as to the comparative usefulness of any or all of the foregoing subjects, they are all included in the public-school course, as laid down in the Education Act, and the necessity for teaching them has been reaffirmed in the regulations of 1885, issued by the department. I wish it to be distinctly understood that none of these things can be omitted in future with impunity unless some better reason for leaving them out can be given than the indolence and the incapacity of the teacher. I see no justification for putting the children of Marlborough in a worse position in these respects than the children of other districts. Excellent school buildings, well-appointed and of ample dimensions, have been built in every direction, and a staff of teachers has been provided on a scale which, relatively to the number of children to be taught in each school, and compared with what is allowed elsewhere, may well be termed liberal. Of no teacher in the Marlborough District can it be truthfully said that he is at all overtasked, or overburdened with numbers.

I am fully aware that in several portions of this report I have expressed myself with unwonted plainness. This I have done advisedly, and after due consideration. Every one of the faults that I have pointed out has already been pointed out in former reports. And, more than that, the remedy has been pointed out as well. There has been no vague fault-finding. No unreasonable demands