

prescribed for Standards IV., V., and VI. greatly curtailed. In this subject twelve problems should suffice for Standard IV., and the work of the two higher standards might, without disadvantage, be reduced in the same proportion. This would leave more time for the practice of freehand drawing, which we take to be of higher educative value, and also for writing. We feel bound to add that the writing of a large number of our schools suffers seriously from the careless scribbling that is allowed on slates and in exercise-books.

On the whole, arithmetic is now one of the best-taught subjects of the school course, though in many schools there is still much room for improvement in the setting out of the work. The time allowed for arithmetic is, in the larger schools, from an hour to an hour and a quarter, and in the smaller schools, about an hour and a half per day. In the latter case this is no doubt a large part of the school time, but in the circumstances of these schools probably not too much, for in them the pupils must necessarily spend a large part of their time at desk work, and the practice of arithmetic is a useful exercise of that kind, and one that is easily examined by the teacher. The amount of actual teaching in this subject which the several standards in such schools usually receive is less than an hour a week. Mental arithmetic receives a very fair share of attention and is often well known. Many teachers use the "Practical Mental Arithmetic" of Longman's series, a book of great merit which we should like to see carefully worked through in every school.

During the year there has been a sensible decline in the intelligence and thoroughness of the teaching of grammar. This is no doubt partly due to a misunderstanding of resolutions adopted by the Board and approved by the Minister. We regard elementary parsing and the general principles of analysis of sentences as one of the most truly educative studies in the entire course of instruction. This is the opinion of many of the best authorities on elementary education, including one so little likely to be swayed by partiality for technicalities as the late Matthew Arnold, who, it is well known, has repeatedly recorded his conviction that even simple exercises in grammar afford a far better test of intelligence than the exercises usually set in arithmetic. It is, however, quite true that grammar and analysis are commonly taught and expounded in text-books with too little regard to their relations to composition; and it is in this direction that improvement is needed. At the recent conference of Inspectors this subject was discussed, and a syllabus of instruction in grammar was suggested and recommended to the Minister, from which, should it be adopted, we believe much improvement in the handling of the subject will result. While the teaching of grammar has, on the whole, declined in efficiency, there are many schools in which it has been most thorough and successful, and has been carried out with considerable regard to its bearing on composition. In Standards III. and IV. there is still found a good deal of guess-work in distinguishing the parts of speech. This seems to arise from neglect to train the pupils first of all to thoroughly work out the meaning of the sentences from which the words to be parsed are taken. In Standard IV. the preparatory study of the sentence should, we think, be carried out to this extent: The statements contained in it should be distinguished, the connectives pointed out, and the person or thing spoken about in each statement and what is said about him or it indicated. This is really simple analysis without technical terms; but it can be readily done by pupils at this stage, and the experience of many of our teachers is that it gives a comprehension of the sentence and of the relation of the parts that greatly promotes accuracy and intelligence in dealing with the grammar exercise. It has the further advantage of familiarising the pupils with structure of sentences that contain two or more statements, and of enabling them to recognise where to begin and end their sentences, and how to connect the statements that compose them. This simple and untechnical analysis seems to us a point of great importance in the treatment of grammar in Standard IV. In the higher standards the treatment should be continued on the same lines but made more precise by the introduction of needful technical terms.

Fair progress continues to be made in the teaching of composition. In many of the exercises handed in during the past year there was, however, much less variety than we should like to find. From their remarkable uniformity we had, in some cases, reason to suspect that the exercises had been learned by rote, and that the children had very little power of writing down what they knew about a subject; but an independent test generally showed that this inference was not warranted, and that, on subjects in which there had been no previous practice, creditable exercises were composed by pupils who had used the same words and sentences in the exercise they had been taught. In many cases the subjects for composition continue to be chosen with little judgment and too exclusively from the lessons in the class reading-books. These lessons, no doubt, furnish a ready supply of matter, and afford scope for selection and abridgment; but for fostering originality of thought and construction they are vastly inferior to topics that come within the pupils' personal knowledge and experience. In the Sixth Reader there occurs a short lesson on "conversation," consisting of brief counsels written by Sir Matthew Hale for the use of his children. This lesson is very commonly set as the subject of a composition exercise, but a moment's reflection should show that the topic is too abstract for children to handle with any freedom or originality, and demands maturity of mind and powers of reflection that are quite beyond the years of the ordinary schoolboy. This may stand as a fair sample of the rather numerous unsuitable subjects on which children are invited to write. Greatly superior to these for the purpose in view are topics that interest young people, their games and amusements, their leisure employments, the employments of grown-up people with which they are familiar, and other subjects that appeal to their curiosity and fall within the range of their personal observation and knowledge, and to such topics we hope to see a more prominent place assigned in future programmes of composition work.

The only other subjects to which we need refer are object-lessons and science. Both of these receive a considerable share of attention, though there are not many teachers who take them up with hearty interest or enthusiasm. On the whole a good deal of useful information is gained from object-lessons, but, if we may generalise from the small number of them which we see given in the course of a year, they seldom possess much merit in other directions. They do not foster, to the degree that might be expected, the power of observing, describing, and reasoning in a