

limited, their notions of the uses and meanings of words are extremely vague, and errors in grammar may have been impressed on their minds from the time they began to talk. It is obvious, then, that the pupils should be encouraged to talk under supervision as much as possible, so that the teacher may point out and correct any of the numerous errors or vulgarisms which are so frequently met with. To this end pupils in their oral work should be required to answer in sentences, or to give at least a few words in answer to a question. Thus, in answer to the question, "What is the capital of France?" the answer "Paris" is insufficient, and should be, "Paris is the capital of France." This, of course, is a very simple case. Take the following: "What kind of horses are these?" (the teacher pointing to a picture). Answer: "Wild." "Put it in a sentence, please." Answer: "They is wild horses." Instances similar to this have occurred again and again, and yet I have considerable difficulty in getting teachers to see the efficacy of this method of answering. By its means the pupils are taught unconsciously—and therefore most effectively—the meaning of a sentence, correct speech becomes a matter of habit, and when pupils reach Standard III. they need very little instruction to be able to write satisfactorily the simple tests required for a pass. Nor are its good effects confined to the special exercises in composition, but on the other subjects it acts beneficially. Pupils will have less difficulty in explaining the words and phrases in their reading-lessons, for I am convinced that they frequently have a general notion of a meaning, but from lack of practice, or from lack of confidence, are unable to express themselves; in history and in geography incomplete answering will be the exception, unless arising from ignorance; explanation of processes in arithmetic will be easier; the pupils will acquire greater confidence, and, not being so much afraid of hearing themselves speak, will be more plastic in the hands of the teacher.

But in the upper standards something more is needed, and the principles which govern the synthesis of sentences must be taught. Pupils must be shown the uses of conjunctions in combining sentences, the uses of the personal and the relative pronouns, the ways in which the words "only," "even," &c., may be used, the effect of the position of words and phrases in modifying the force of a sentence, and so on. This will require special well-prepared lessons. I have seen one or two such, but as a rule teachers are content to set the pupils to write ten lines or so on a given subject, and after correction to hand it back again, and there the lesson ends. If teachers adopted such plans as are shown in Longmans' "School Composition," and in Goyen's "Composition," they would more easily obtain satisfactory results in a subject that has always been full of difficulty to teachers of all grades, even to the best and most experienced.

In Standard IV. I have required the composition exercise to be written as a letter, with correct beginning and ending. As a rule the form of the letter was satisfactory, except that pupils had not been taught to end the letter in a manner appropriate to the person to whom the letter was addressed, a letter to a parent not unusually ending "Yours truly," possibly "Your's truly."

In Standard V. and Standard VI., business, social, and official letters were required, and were fairly satisfactory. Paraphrasing was very weak.

As I before pointed out, the bad spelling in the body of the composition sometimes spoiled the exercise, such words as their, there, were, where, being misspelled even in Standard V. and Standard VI.

*Geography.*—The first lessons in geography are given in Standard II., but, as a rule, with very poor results. The definitions were learned by rote without the pupils getting much of an idea of the actual objects, an island or a peninsula being to them merely a string of words they were required to commit to memory. A whole class would repeat word for word the definition, say, of the peninsula, but if a peninsula were drawn on the blackboard or pointed out on one of the school maps and the pupils were asked what they would call it, the chances were very much against their giving the correct answer—strait, gulf, and cape being favourite replies. At my earlier examinations, in school after school, the pupils informed me that they had never seen an ocean, but if asked if they had seen the sea, all hands would be held up. If the name of the sea were asked, a correct answer was rare, and I have been told that it is the Mediterranean Sea that surrounds our shores. Very few had heard of a volcano in New Zealand, and children who had lived on an island all their lives, and had seen the Sugar Loaves at Moturoa, could not tell me the name of an island they had seen.

To teach the geographical definitions the teacher should begin by drawing attention to the physical features of the country with which the pupils are familiar. Creeks, gullies, mountains, &c., should be pointed out, and when these are understood the teacher should proceed to show how they are indicated on maps, but as far as possible each geographical term should be associated with its corresponding local feature, and should call up a mental picture of that feature. This being done, it is easy to proceed from the known to the unknown, for the geographical features of the world are in the main merely a reproduction of the school district on a larger and grander scale.

In Standard III. the methods of teaching geography were unsatisfactory, with the result that, when pupils were placed before a map, they failed lamentably. If asked the capital of Russia most pupils would be able to answer "St. Petersburg," but if asked to point out St. Petersburg on a map they might not know in what part of the map of Europe to look for it. In the prescribed New Zealand geography the work was somewhat better, yet by no means satisfactory, even the capital puzzling many pupils, New Plymouth being frequently singled out for the honour.

In Standard IV. the general geography of the world was very fairly known, but a want of thoroughness was apparent in the preparation of the New Zealand geography—products, industries, means of communication, and places of interest to tourists being poorly answered. The geography of this class is relatively much harder than that of any other class, and teachers would do well to take in Standard III. a fuller knowledge of New Zealand than is required by the standard regulations, and thus lighten the burden in Standard IV.

In Standard V. and Standard VI. the general geography was as a rule fairly answered, but in very few schools was the answering in physical geography satisfactory, the excellent answering