

The test-cards in arithmetic secured the uniform approbation of the teachers; yet in many cases where at the beginning of the examination the teacher was hopeful of the issue, the performance of the pupils came lamentably short of every one's expectations. In most cases the source from which failure in arithmetic springs is not difficult to trace. Children come to school associating numbers with things; here by a strange perversion they are allowed to drift into the habit of dissociating what they had previously associated, and presently numbers become to them but empty abstractions. Nothing is more certain than that the youngest pupils reason quickly and accurately about easy concrete numbers, whether the principle involved be addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division, or even a combination of these; and nothing is more patent to an observer than the fact that the opportunity to do so is, in many schools, persistently denied them. And so the dreary work goes on, carrying the pupils from class to class alive to mechanical processes but dead to rational principles. In the upper standards the same blemish is perpetuated in the fatuous and slothful habit some teachers have of allowing pupils while doing sums to cover their slates with figures unaccompanied by the terms denoting the quantities represented, with the result that in the end hopeless confusion will in all probability have usurped the place of transparent reasoning. That all sums, whether direct or problematic, should, as far as possible, be set out in a self-explanatory way has been dinned into the ears of certain teachers year after year, and when the Inspector in despair at last puts the matter in a strong light in his report to the Board such teachers have no good grounds for thinking themselves hardly dealt by.

Geography continues to receive very niggardly treatment in far too many schools. It is to be feared, indeed, that not a few teachers but ill comprehend the paramount importance of the subject, and consequently fail to give their pupils the slightest clue to its bearings on individual, social, and national life. For this failure to entertain the vital aims within the scope of the subject there appear to be two chief causes—an abuse of the text-books, and a narrow interpretation of the syllabus. The text-books in use furnish one way of conveying geographical information; but there is reason to suppose that, in the hands of some teachers, they afford all or almost all the means, and in some cases also the end, which is merely to answer a certain number of questions. No text-book or combination of text-books, however excellent as an aid, can take the place of systematic oral instruction. Again, the outline of the subject given in the syllabus appears to be, in the eyes of some teachers at any rate, the measure of the subject. In one way, such teachers are perfectly right; in another, entirely wrong: for the point is not what is the most expeditious way in which a certain definite number of facts can be packed into a pupil's mind, but how can his mind be prepared for the reception of facts—how can a knowledge of them be imparted with such a measure of intelligence as to secure permanent abode among, and assimilation with, pre-existing facts, so as to form part and parcel of an organized body of knowledge. But let us not be too exacting. There is a real difficulty here, which only one teaching the subject single-handed to five different classes can fully appreciate. For the guidance of such we offer the following hints: First, the teacher should sedulously endeavour to lodge in his pupils' minds at the earlier stages of instruction clear mental pictures of the geographical features under observation; second, at every geography-lesson there should be map- or feature-drawing by the teacher or pupils, or by both; third, opportune lessons should put the pupils on the right track, and they may then be left to cover what of the ground remains with the aid of their maps, atlases, and text-books. In his set lessons the teacher might proceed on some such lines as the following: The pupils are studying, let us say, the towns of some district: one—or more if there is time—will be selected by the teacher, who notices (1) its absolute physical setting, by which is meant its position with regard to the factors determining its climate, from which may be deducted the characteristic products of the adjacent region; (2) its relative physical setting with regard (a) to the country in which it is placed, and (b) to foreign countries, near or remote, in which connection would be studied roadways, waterways, and railways; (3) its action and reaction (a) on the country in which it is placed and (b) on foreign countries, under which heading would be fully dealt with its exports, imports, and the characteristic industries both of itself and the adjacent region; (4) its municipal as reflecting its central government; (5) its population as compared with some well-known place fixed upon as unit; (6) its historical or military importance. This scheme, which is not a university method, and by no means so formidable as it looks, may be varied, abridged, or expanded to suit the feature studied and the experience and capacities of the pupils. Of one thing there can be no doubt: either the teacher must proceed on some such lines, or the pupils must leave school destitute of true geographical knowledge.

To enable the different schools to ascertain their relative positions as to proficiency in the class and additional subjects, we have compiled the following table, which shows approximately the standard in all the schools of the district:—

CLASS-SUBJECTS.

Subject.	Inferior.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Very Good.	Excellent.
Grammar	19 schools	44 schools	30 schools	19 schools	20 schools	1 school
History	17 "	24 "	30 "	30 "	27 "	5 "
Geography	27 "	33 "	23 "	23 "	18 "	9 "
Elementary science and object-lessons	16 "	31 "	39 "	25 "	21 "	1 "
Mental arithmetic	32 "	45 "	27 "	23 "	6 "	0 "