

were considered by many of the teachers themselves to be too easy; and when compared with those set to Standard IV. they were pronounced to be more suggestive of something in the nature of a very awkward leap than of an easy passage along a continuous track.

*Composition.*—Since composition was first made a pass-subject very noticeable improvement has taken place in the exercises done by the pupils. Formerly many of the papers were disfigured by gross grammatical blunders, crudities of expression, and poverty of matter. All this has been to a large extent changed, and the way paved for a still higher degree of excellence. The possibilities of the subject are of course limitless; but, though we cannot hope for any general evidence of the better qualities of style and of originality of thought, we need not despair of being able to reach a very high standard if improvement proceeds at the same rate as it has done during the past few years.

*Geography.*—In this subject too we see a satisfactory amount of improvement. There is less sacrifice of the spirit of geography to the letter of topography. What needs to be emphasized is that the heart of the subject is to be found within the pupil's own experience, in his own school and district. This experience, thoroughly interpreted, becomes a centre of light from which the geography of remote regions may be successfully explored. There are, indeed, few geographical facts and principles which do not find apt illustration from the pupil's immediate surroundings. The circumstance that physical geography is very often a closed book to our pupils is largely due to their attempt to commit printed pages to memory while all the time they are in gross darkness as to the secrets that nature stands ready to reveal. As far as possible pupils should in this part of the subject be required to support every *what* with a *why*, every fact with a principle. For the purposes of teaching and examination teachers are allowed to group Standards IV., V. and VI. in geography, but their experience has been that pupils fresh from Standard III. do not take kindly to the work of Standard V. or Standard VI., and that it is much more profitable to instruct Standard IV. as a separate class. Our experience supports that of the teachers.

*CLASS-SUBJECTS.—Grammar.*—Grammar has received widely different treatment in different schools. In some it has been taught with marked success, but in most with neutral or distinctly poor results. Few will seek to deny the excellence of this subject as a means of mental discipline, and it is generally admitted that a love for grammar on the part of the pupils affords presumptive evidence that a spirit of intelligence pervades the school. But its very excellence, implying as it does long and systematic study, effectually bars its adequate treatment. It is not that teachers are indifferent to its claims; much less that, as a body, they are incompetent to teach it. In the competition of subjects for a place in the syllabus it is simply crushed out. We are not alone in thinking that instruction in grammar should go hand-in-hand with instruction in composition, and that the principles of the former should be introduced just in so far as they are necessary to promote the effective teaching of the latter. After all, the main thing for the average pupil is that he should be able to express his thoughts accurately, clearly, and expeditiously. That the mental training consequent on intelligent drill in formal grammar may not be altogether lost to our pupils that subject may very well be retained as an optional subject for Standards V. and VI.

*History.*—History is on the whole faithfully taught—that is, so far as it is capable of being taught at all in accordance with the scheme at present prescribed. To give detached lessons in the form of little stories about selected persons and events is, no doubt, the natural way of introducing children to the study of history; but the continuance of this method beyond Standard IV. implies, we venture to say, at once an illiberal treatment of the subject and an immense loss to the pupils. Surely the boys and girls of our highest classes are able to seize the meaning of the tendency of the stream of events in, say, the Stuart period, and to relish the keen intellectual enjoyment that comes of the perception of cause and effect in the affairs of the commonwealth. It appears to us that during the last years of our pupils' school-life we continue to give them, in the matter of history, food suited only for babes and sucklings. We are glad to be able to state that in a number of schools the elements of social economy have been taught with marked success.

*Elementary Science.*—Regarding this subject we have somewhat to say, which though not new is true, and of very considerable import. In a great many schools, some of them very large schools, there is nothing whatever in the way of scientific apparatus. It may well excite wonder that in these days when the scientific spirit is abroad we are still confronted by this startling anomaly. To attempt the teaching of elementary science without the use of apparatus is merely to succeed in wasting time; and to examine to any purpose pupils so taught is a task as unprofitable as it is hopeless. Yet it must be taught and they must be examined on these lines till some mode of introducing a sufficient amount of apparatus into all schools is discovered. Much might be done by the teachers themselves; still more by the teachers in conjunction with the more ingenious of their pupils. The interest in, and the value of, observations on an experiment cannot fail to be greatly augmented when the experimenters have provided the needful materials and apparatus. Perhaps it might not be a bad plan for the Board to make a contribution in aid of the teacher's stock of material and apparatus where he has provided everything it was in his power to provide without incurring direct expense.

*Mental Arithmetic.*—A passing reference has already been made to this subject in the paragraph dealing with arithmetic generally. In this place we merely call the attention of teachers in whose time-table mental arithmetic finds no place to take the following facts, proved and testified to by those teachers among us who have the courage to teach the subject systematically: It is of immense service in passing from one arithmetical principle to another, as well as in revising and consolidating the work of any given term, and, hand-in-hand with good writing, it is the best introduction a pupil can have who seeks employment in any business capacity.

*Recitation.*—Though there is some improvement we cannot yet say that good recitation is a characteristic feature of the schools of this district. In many cases the pupils are required to prepare too many verses, with the result that they do not know them, and only succeed in making a