

their pupils enough in the spelling of those small common words ('there,' 'their,' 'were,' 'where,' 'to,' 'two,' &c.) over which they are so apt to trip." I believe that half the failures in spelling in the upper classes are due to mistakes in words of this class. Transcription is of little use in impressing the spelling of such words. I have satisfied myself of this by getting pupils who had just done a transcription exercise correctly to turn their slates, and then write, without help, a difficult phrase or two from the same exercise, and very often the pupils have blundered in such words. To be effective, transcription needs to be followed up by writing to dictation some or all of the troublesome words in the passage. This I have never seen a teacher do, but it would be labour and time well spent."

As to the teaching of writing, the opinions of my colleagues show little agreement. Mr. Goodwin "cannot say that writing has much improved, or is improving." He thinks less attention is given to the teaching of this subject now than formerly, and that the test imposed is not so severe. No doubt, in the smaller schools less time is now given to the sole teaching of writing than was once the case. Half an hour a day of the teacher's undivided attention cannot be spared for it in the smaller schools, if justice is to be done to the other subjects of instruction, and especially to reading and English studies generally. But writing can be adequately taught with a less share of the teacher's undivided attention; and the gain from the better distribution of his time and attention, in my opinion, far outweighs the loss. There are, however, not a few schools in which the time devoted to copybook writing is insufficient, and I have repeatedly noted this in reports made in the course of the year. It is undesirable to lay down hard-and-fast rules on such a matter as this, but I think not less than three lessons a week in copybook writing should be arranged for in the higher classes of every school, and more time than this should be given to it from Standard IV. downwards. This is exclusive of transcription and all other forms of written exercises. Mr. Mulgan (Waikato District) reports writing as "not so good as it might be, the letters showing a want of symmetry, and the whole wanting in neatness and finish." Mr. Grierson, himself the best penman among the Inspectors, says: "It is a very unusual thing to find a school in which the writing in copybooks is not at least of satisfactory quality. In the written exercises done at the examinations, the writing in a good few schools is only fair." Mr. Crowe reports as follows: "Generally speaking, the writing was satisfactory, though in too many cases it was wanting in neatness. In only two schools (Northern District) was it unsatisfactory." My own experience is that, though writing has not markedly improved except in isolated cases, it is in no way falling off, and is, on the whole, satisfactory, while in a fair number of schools, both large and small, it is very creditable. The examination exercises in subjects other than the writing test are of necessity somewhat hurriedly done, and the quality of the writing they show suffers from this as well as from the pupils' preoccupation with other matters. If much more time were allowed the writing would doubtless be better, but this arrangement, if otherwise practicable, allows scope for copying and dishonest communication between pupil and pupil, which teachers and Inspectors alike are anxious to minimise.

To make writing better than it is, we want, not so much more attention to it from teachers, for of this there is, as a rule, little lack, but stronger and firmer discipline, and more earnest endeavour and better attention on the part of pupils. Where we find superior writing we almost invariably find stronger government and superior discipline also. A great many of our teachers do not rouse, and do not sufficiently bestir themselves to rouse, the fine working spirit, the concentrated effort and willing application, that are indispensable conditions of the best training in mechanical exercises as well as in those demanding the exercise of intelligence. If it were a mere question of so much time per week, or of a certain degree of attention from teachers, progress in penmanship could be secured with comparative certainty and ease. But the problem is not one of this order. Teachers still pay too little heed to the way pupils sit at writing and hold the pen. In the new copybooks lately selected by the Board a woodcut illustrating these positions with great clearness appears inside the cover of each book. Strict regard to the positions there shown will be expected. Neglect of this can be counted only as an indication of carelessness or of want of proper discipline. Mr. Salmon, in the work above referred to, says: "Good writing is absolutely impossible unless the pen be held properly, and good writing, under healthy conditions, is impossible unless the body, arms, and head be rightly placed also. Children must, therefore, from the very beginning, remember and understand a long set of rules, and the best way to make them remember and understand is to make them practise." These views are out of fashion with many modern teachers, but they are sound and important. To see that proper positions are observed during writing should help discipline in many ways, for the common disregard of teachers' directions in this matter is an insidious and fertile source of disrespect for the teacher's authority. I may add that 91 per cent. of the pupils examined in writing satisfied the Inspectors, and passed in the subject.

Drawing is in general more satisfactory than writing, and is good in a large number of schools. Both Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Grierson speak in favourable terms of the teaching in the schools they have examined. In all the larger schools a test (on slates) in freehand drawing was given, and the same has been done in the smaller schools where time could be found for the exercise.

Little need be said about the teaching of arithmetic, which was referred to in some detail in last year's report. Teachers would do well to look now and then into the suggestions and criticisms offered there. On the whole, there has been satisfactory progress in the teaching of the subject, and this has been most conspicuous in Standards IV. and VI. In the latter the greatly improved examination results are in part due to the easier tests applied, but I think there has been real progress. In Standard III. the examples in addition of money have for some years been so easy as to discourage a thorough drilling in this most useful exercise. This defect in the Education Department's sets of questions greatly needs to be remedied. The class in which the work is least satisfactory is Standard V. Here proportion is not as well understood as it should be, and easy problems in fractions are, on the average, indifferently dealt with. Much of the work of this class demands the exercise of simple reasoning, and I do not think pupils have anything like sufficient drill in