

In Standards III. to VI. the arithmetic was done on foolscap, and we are very pleased to be able to state that at the majority of schools the quality of the work as regards neatness, good figuring and arrangement, nice setting-out and ruling-off of answers, and logical setting-out of the steps in problems was very good, while in some schools it could not have been surpassed. Our teachers are deserving of much credit in this respect. Also the slate-work in Standards I. and II. was generally characterized by neatness and good figuring and arrangement.

Mental arithmetic showed a decided improvement during the year, but there is still much to be desired at many schools. At small schools a teacher has so many classes in reading and other oral lessons that it is difficult for him to find time for the actual teaching necessary to produce good results in mental arithmetic, and so the lesson in the subject frequently degenerates into a mere setting of sums on a blackboard, with a few cursory questions later on. The common practice in slate arithmetic of using the pencil in making the simplest calculations, as farthings to pence, pence to shillings, and shillings to pounds, must have a prejudicial effect upon mental arithmetic.

In geography the work varied very much. We are pleased to note an improvement on the whole, but in many schools this subject still remains unsatisfactory in the higher standards. We think failure to produce good results is in many cases due to loose methods of revising. While the prescribed work is being gone over for the first time, the lessons may be well arranged, and be made interesting; but, in revising, the memory is wearied with tiresome reiterations in the same beaten tracks. Then the teaching takes the form of cram. But such need not be; for the facts in geography can be presented in so many different ways of relation to each other that revision lessons can be made interesting, as well as a training in applying knowledge already acquired. In this connection we would strongly advise the frequent drawing of sketch-maps on the blackboard. For example, the teacher would show a range of mountains to represent the Himalayas; and then he would mark in and name, with the aid of his pupils, the rivers rising from its slopes, the adjacent countries, mountains, &c. This example is suggested by the poor answers received to one of our Standard VI. questions, viz., "Name the rivers whose sources are in Thibet." There is no doubt that at many schools there is too little map-study and map-drawing, while there is too much dreary grind at text-books. And one thing that leads to this unsatisfactory treatment is, that maps of New Zealand only are prescribed for examination, and even these only in Standards IV. and V. We should say that the outlines of the maps received of the North Island and South Island were at many schools excellent, but knowledge of features and spelling of names were too often inferior. Misspelling of names is a bad fault, for it points to a most reprehensible want of thoroughness in the teaching.

Another cause of failure in geography in the higher standards is, we think, the inability of pupils to form a mental picture of some desired part of the globe. This inability is the more surprising to us when we think of the fine work in this connection we so often get in Standards II. and III. "Name the most important seas connected with the ——— Ocean," was often very badly answered, often not attempted, by Standard IV. pupils; but such a question requires knowledge of merely Standard II. requirements. In a word, questions in geography which require some mental effort on the part of the pupil to determine what are to be the salient features of his answer,—questions, in fact, which do not baldly ask what or where are so-and-so,—are almost invariably badly treated.

Then, again, if the requirements of the syllabus for the higher standards were defined more clearly in detail, no doubt we would obtain better results. When we find the majority (sometimes all) of the members of class after class unable to write anything about Gobi, or Pamir, or Deccan, or Magellan—when we find pupils unable to state in what countries Glasgow, Bremen, Buenos Ayres, and suchlike are situated—we must come to the conclusion that for some teachers at all events the wording of the syllabus—"conspicuous geographical features of continents," and "great ports"—is not clear enough. We may say here that no name that is not to be found in the text-books recommended by us for use in the schools appeared on any of our examination-cards. We should like to see the work of Standard IV. lightened. At present the requirements are very varied and extensive; while some of them, to admit of intelligent treatment, require more power of thought than can reasonably be expected from such young pupils.

Physical geography in Standards V. and VI. was, as usual, generally poor. The answers on "the globe" and on "climate" were particularly disappointing. The "text-book grind" before referred to was here much in evidence, and we obtained some beautifully-worded answers that had a familiar ring about them: unfortunately they were lacking in one important essential, for they had nothing whatever to do with the questions.

In Standard III. good to excellent work was received at most schools. The prescribed rivers and mountains we always took orally: on the whole they were well known, and it was nothing unusual to find every pupil in a large class answering every question in five to ten rounds, and voluntarily giving many rivers and mountains outside those prescribed. But this has been the case for some years in Standard III.; yet the pupils, when they reach Standards IV., V., and VI., fail to write answers to questions concerning the same rivers and mountains. The towns of New Zealand were generally well prepared. The prescribed countries and colonies, with their capitals, we had written on slates: these generally were well known, but the spelling too often was inferior. Standard II. pupils made a fine appearance in their work at the majority of schools. Sometimes the definitions, sometimes the oceans and seas, were not well known, but very few classes failed in both.

Before leaving this subject we should like to say that we are of the opinion we could obtain more intelligent and useful work in the higher standards in geography if we could examine some of the branches orally, and therefore we again recommend that geography be placed in the class-subject group. Geography especially lends itself to oral examination; but as long as it is a pass-subject the examination in Standards IV., V., and VI. must be a written one. There is no doubt that, as