

the Otago Inspectors point out, geography is *the* cram subject of the syllabus; and, do what we will, we find ourselves powerless to stop this cramming by means of a written examination, especially as we are debarred from demanding a map of any country but New Zealand.

Drawing generally is a satisfactory subject. Most of our teachers appear to find no difficulty with it, and for this, no doubt, we are largely indebted to the Technical School in Wanganui. In freehand drawing we still have sometimes to complain of unlawful aids being used. Standard IV. geometry showed improvement, though at too many schools it is yet below the mark. Standard V. scale drawing was often really excellent.

Composition is by no means as strong as we should like. In Standard III. the little exercises were often very creditable. In Standard IV. the letter-writing was very fair at a number of schools, but combining of sentences was seldom well done. In Standard V. and Standard VI. the subjects treated in the letters varied very much in difficulty at different schools, and frequently the composition was purely a feat of memory. The number of subjects on the list presented to us for the year's work was often far too small, while some teachers were not prepared with any list.

In this subject we are of opinion that there is still on the part of many teachers too much of a tendency to have recourse to "reproduction" in one or other of its various disguises; and for this some of the popular text-books no doubt are partly responsible. But reproduction, although it may be, if well handled, a useful exercise for occasional practice, can hardly be called true composition at all; for the child with the best verbal memory, and the least originality, does the best work. Original work, however crude, must be intellectually superior. In educating in written composition we should, as in other subjects, be guided by Nature's teaching. A child should be trained to use his own materials, to reproduce his own familiar talk, to write of the things he has seen with his own eyes and felt with his own hands. No matter how awkward and clumsy may be the structure he raises, still it is something put together by himself after his own fashion, and with materials of his own collection.

Paraphrasing in Standards V. and VI. seldom was good, while at many schools it was very poor, and at some ludicrously senseless. Pupil-teachers and candidates for scholarships, also, seldom showed any power in dealing with paraphrasing. But weakness in this branch of the work is much to be regretted, for, as Inspector Petrie points out, to give in other language the sense of a passage of verse constitutes a fine test of intelligence and insight; and our teachers should do all in their power to train their more advanced pupils in the acquiring of the width of understanding, the sympathy, and the imagination that are necessary to cope with this exercise. We sometimes found paraphrasing confused with explanation.

Another requirement that was badly treated in the higher classes was the changing of phrases into clauses, and *vice versa*.

Grammar continues to be more or less unsatisfactory above Standard III. at many schools, while at a few schools the subject was particularly bad. In Standard III. it was often good to excellent, and seldom poor. In Standard IV. we sometimes received good work, but, as a rule, the pupils broke down when some thought was required. In Standard V. and Standard VI. the analysis and the parsing were evidently more often than not the outcome of pure guesswork; while in correction of false grammar, the rules and the examples given exactly contradicted each other. An illustration of the kind of work received in analysis will not be out of place. Of ten pupils in the same class five were asked to analyse, "The cowardly thief kicked the unfortunate policeman," and five "Three children had Tom Long, the smith"; and what was the result? The parts in the same order as they appear in both sentences were called "subject," "predicate," "object." But this is another example of the "text-book grind" referred to before under "Geography," and of course points to defects in teaching; and for such defects both the text-books and the syllabus are partly responsible.

First, as regards the text-books. It is not sufficiently emphasized in them that the consideration of the functions of words is the only true guide to their classification under the parts of speech; and that the names of phrases, clauses, and sentences should be judged upon the same basis. The more modern books certainly have improved in this respect, but they are too loose in their treatment. For instance, the child is told in one line that "The verb is a telling word," in the next that "The adjective tells what sort, &c.," and in the next that "The adverb tells how, when, or where." Now, why should not the adjective and the adverb have their own exclusive technical terms—viz., "limiting, describing, or modifying"? Then we could have generally—(1) The naming word, (2) the telling or stating word, (3) the limiting word of (1), (4) the limiting word of (2), (5) the connecting word of sentences, (6) the connecting and governing word of words. Then, again, the text-books generally disregard synthesis, and give examples in analysis merely for its own sake, in place of for the sake of guiding pupils in phrase-arrangement and clause-arrangement—in the requirements of composition, in fact. Many teachers err in this respect.

Secondly, as regards the syllabus. Well, some of the foregoing remarks apply equally as well to the syllabus as to the text-books. There is no need to go into detail here, for this was done during the year in reply to a request from the Education Department that we should express our views on the subject under discussion. We shall, therefore, now merely state that the syllabus does not, by its requirements, clearly indicate what we think goes without saying—that all the teaching of grammar in elementary schools should be based upon what is most suitable for obtaining sound composition. We are of opinion that the treatment of the structure of the sentence and the logical relation of its parts is left until too late in the child's school-life; and that, even when it does find a place in the two highest standards, it is such a subordinate one to mere classification as to be almost useless. Grammar would be a more educative subject than it is at present, and would take a higher place in public estimation, if the requirements paid more attention to the securing of good composition, and less to "gerund grinding." Then, the fact of grammar being placed by the syllabus in the class-subject group will always militate against really good treatment; and this is