

In the larger schools writing is in general much better than in the smaller, and in the former it is usually satisfactory, though not often good. "The writing in the south-east district," Mr. Goodwin says, "was certainly better than what I have reported on in previous years. The use of the new copy-books will have a good effect if pains is taken to have the head-lines carefully imitated." Mr. Crowe states that improvement is not as rapid as he had expected. Teachers, he says, do not insist on sufficiently close imitation of the copy, being satisfied if the work is neat; moreover, they are too indifferent to the position in which pupils sit when writing. In most of his schools Mr. Purdie finds the writing at least very fair. Mr. Grierson found it good in a large number of schools, and satisfactory in most; and he adds, "I never meet with poor writing in a well-taught school." Mr. Mulgan thinks "better work can be done in this subject," and that the way to secure it is "to insist on good writing in all the written work submitted, and not in the copy-books alone"—which is most true. In most schools, he thinks, we must look for improvement to more efficient correction and better discipline. The need for firmer discipline as a condition of general improvement in writing is really the crux of the matter. In many cases directions for holding the pen and for sitting in a proper position are given and reiterated, but they are not carried out. And I am convinced that many teachers have no real faith in the value and importance of such directions. On their value all special teachers of writing are, I believe, agreed; and persons who are not specialists may very well accept what the specialists recommend, and carry out their directions heartily and thoroughly. Much of the copy-book writing we see is too slow. In the smaller schools at least there is no very urgent reason for keeping all writing the same exercise at the same time. The better writers should be encouraged to write more than they do now. In few schools are more than two copy-books filled in a year. This seems to me to afford insufficient practice, even when other forms of careful writing are taken into account. I am of opinion that the writing in the copy-books now in use is too large.*

The teaching of drawing is in general very satisfactory, except the geometrical problems set for Standards IV. and V. In many of the larger schools the drawing on slates was good.

In arithmetic the tests applied in the higher classes were somewhat easier than heretofore, especially in Standard VI., and they were generally better answered. In the larger schools a great deal of good work was met with. In Mr. Goodwin's district "the instruction in this subject has much improved; it is more intelligent, more scientific, and less empirical than formerly." Mr. Crowe noticed weakness in Standard V., some improvement in Standard VI., and good work elsewhere. "In most of the schools" (in Mr. Mulgan's district) "arithmetic was well done—indeed, in none was it poor; weakness appeared most frequently in Standard V. and Standard VI." He observes that greater power in dealing with problems needs to be cultivated; these form the best if not the only test of intelligent teaching. The setting out of the work has not always satisfied him. Mr. Grierson found the subject generally satisfactory, and nearly always carefully set out. Mr. Purdie's experience is different, as might be expected from the circumstances of the northern district; he finds that "in most of the schools the pupils did their arithmetic very fairly." Mental arithmetic I have generally found to be satisfactory, and often good, but several of the Inspectors consider it a weak subject in their country schools.

The treatment of composition by the pupils continues to show improvement. "In most schools," Mr. Purdie observes, "composition was much better than I had expected to find it. The pupils, on the whole, seemed able to deal with the subjects in a clear and comprehensive manner. Most of the errors noticed by me were to some extent avoidable, and even careless. Omissions of stops and misspelling of easy words were the faults most frequently met with." Mr. Crowe does not find any noticeable improvement here. Mr. Goodwin "has not had to record many failures in composition, and thinks that, on the whole, better work is now being done." Exercises otherwise creditable showed, however, but little command of language. He finds the best exercises come from pupils who read at home for their amusement. "This habit should be encouraged; nothing else will, in my opinion, so surely give freedom of style and an enlarged vocabulary." Mr. Mulgan says, "A good deal of creditable work was done in this subject, especially in Standards IV. and V. The exercises of Standard VI. were not so satisfactory as those from the next lower class." Mr. Grierson points out that too large a proportion of the composition exercises are done on slates, and consequently imperfectly corrected. This is an arrangement that one has frequent occasion to complain of. In most schools it is absolutely necessary to correct all the longer composition exercises outside school hours if good results are to be obtained. It is highly desirable that one composition exercise a week should be written in an exercise-book or on sheets of paper, which should be kept in the school. Mr. Grierson would even like to see this made compulsory. In the higher classes pupils should be trained to produce longer exercises. In my experience, more pupils in Standard VI. fail from poverty of matter and thought than from all other causes combined. In writing about familiar subjects there is a tendency to pass over obvious or commonplace considerations that might appropriately form the bulk of the exercise.

Geography is now a pass-subject only in Standard VI. In that class the political geography prescribed was satisfactorily known, but the mathematical and physical sections have not, as a rule, been efficiently taught. It is, however, very difficult for young persons to give clear explanations of the causes of the seasons, and such phenomena, owing to their complicated nature, and I believe that the teaching here is not so barren as written answers would lead us to suppose. As to the subject generally, the best work was found in some of the smaller schools. In the larger ones the use, for the first time, of an oral examination in Standards III. to V. has placed the pupils at some disadvantage. While the positions of places on the map were for the most part readily shown, there was difficulty in getting the children to tell where they were and what they had

* Where the Archimedean pen-holders are in use shoulder-nibs should be rejected. They cause the point of the pen to be too far in front of the point where the holder is grasped in the hand.