

a lesson to be taught to the upper infants, and in nine cases out of ten here would be found the source of the trouble.

Spelling in the special tests is, as a rule, satisfactory, but in composition, geography, &c., continues to be poor. This points to neglect of good methods of instruction, and to neglect of the blackboard and recapitulation when new words are being taught in the general work. Lack of thoroughness in correcting the written work tends to produce the same result. To the complaint that pupils cannot learn spelling I give little credence, for I think that the percentage of children who cannot learn spelling is little, if at all, greater than the percentage of children who are blind or who are deaf. Correct spelling is acquired by visual impressions, or by what may be termed the visual memory, and unless this be deficient there is no reason why, under proper methods of instruction, it cannot be developed in the same way as the faculties. Indeed, incapable teaching rather than visual deficiency should be charged with the responsibility for the inferior spelling.

Writing is generally satisfactory, and the habits of neatness and tidy arrangement of work acquired by most pupils constitute an invaluable training which should be of the greatest use. In some schools the letters are taught as a whole, and not by means of their elements. This is, I think, a mistake, for there can be no doubt that, whichever be the system of writing adopted, the Mulhauser method of teaching, in a more or less modified form, should be employed.

In arithmetic the methods show steady improvement. Accuracy, as tested by the cards, is much the same as in previous years. Mental arithmetic, however, is far from satisfactory. When taking oral lessons I frequently find that pupils in, say Standard III. are quite unable mentally to reduce pence to shillings, shillings to pounds, and so on, and when doing written work perform such operations laboriously on the slates. Much time is thus wasted, and dexterity in dealing with quantities is not acquired. Special lessons on short methods are necessary, but facility in mental calculation should be acquired chiefly in the ordinary school work. Many valuable exercises might be framed on the work of the Standard, or of a lower Standard, to enable the various kinds of problems and processes to be rapidly tested or recapitulated.

Composition, though showing progress, is probably the "pass" subject that leaves the greatest room for improvement, and, though teachers are giving greater attention and care to it, improvement is but slow. As I have previously stated, it is a subject beset with the greatest difficulties. The generally satisfactory character of the oral work eradicates the simpler colloquial errors before composition becomes a subject for examination, and consequently more time can be given to the study of the structure of sentences. Composition is becoming less subordinate to grammar, the tendency being to teach only so much grammar as will serve to explain the principles of composition, for committing to memory rules of syntax is not found to be a royal road to a knowledge of the structure of sentences.

Science gives less satisfaction than any other subject, and practically no progress is being made, the teaching being only an approximation to what it should be. The knowledge acquired is of an empirical character, observation and experiment being displaced by "telling" and "learning-off," thus rendering science unscientific, and reducing to drudgery what can be made one of the most fascinating and educative subjects of the school course. Two causes tend to produce this result—(1) Lack of knowledge on the part of the teachers, and (2) absence of apparatus in schools. The establishment of classes under qualified instructors would overcome the first difficulty, and I see no insuperable obstacle in the way. The best results could be obtained only by lectures combined with practice in a laboratory provided with simple but suitable appliances and conveniences. Indeed, the laboratory work is the more important, for to be able to instruct others the student must perform the experiments himself. Such work could be made part of a general scheme for technical education, for the appliances could be used for "school classes" and "continuation classes," in addition to classes for teachers. I am satisfied a workable scheme could be devised, and, with the grants and allowances under "The Manual and Technical Instruction Act, 1900," would cost a sum not beyond the hopes of attainment. Remove the lack of knowledge on the part of the teacher and the second obstacle to successful work is to a great extent removed, for, if the teachers only know how, there are many ways of making cheap rough-and-ready appliances to demonstrate experiments. Small grants similar to those made to Committees for school libraries would, I believe, offer sufficient encouragement to school authorities to bestir themselves to get sets of appliances for their schools.

Object-lessons are much more satisfactorily taught than is science, though between them and science a close relationship exists, both leading the pupil to acquire knowledge through observation and experiment. A scheme of object-lessons in which most of the lessons are not, and possibly cannot be, illustrated by actual objects cannot be considered satisfactory. As far as possible these objects should be kept in the school for reference, for revisal, and so on, and could be made the nuclei of school museums such as I have referred to in former reports, and are so prominent a feature in the schools of the Old Country. These objects would provide material for object-lessons properly so called; but there are other lessons which are valuable, and should be included—i.e., lessons of information illustrated by pictures, models, diagrams, &c. Here, again, the faculty of observation would be brought into play. The methods by which the lessons are taught show steady improvement, though one sometimes finds a teacher beginning by *telling* about the object instead of requiring the pupils to make an examination by means of the senses. Its form, size, properties, should be elicited, and from these its uses deduced. I should like to point out that inexperienced teachers are not always to blame for inferior methods, for the object-lesson books one sometimes sees are utterly pernicious in the way the method is shown. The matter may be good, but the methods violate every principle of teaching. Such books, however, are not so common as formerly, and teachers are taking their lessons from the text-books of more thoughtful writers.