

RECITATION.—The number of lines memorised was not always equal to the demands of the syllabus. This year the choice of selections was usually exercised with more discrimination. Sometimes lugubrious pieces were still found too numerous. There appears to be some misconception as to what constitutes unwholesome poetry. Verse in which pathos occurs is not necessarily pessimistic—*e.g.*, “The Burial of Sir John Moore” deals with shadow and tragedy: “Slowly and sadly we laid him down . . .” but the poem is really a silver-toned pæan of triumph over one whose day’s work is well accomplished:—

Little he’ll reck if they let him sleep on,
In the grave where a Briton has laid him.

On the other hand Goodrich’s poem, “The River,” ending:—

But these bright scenes are o’er,
And darkly flows my wave;
I hear the ocean’s roar,
And there must be my grave!

is a bad mental furnishing wherewith to equip the quick imagination of any child. The trouble with the aspirate, if at all evident in recitation, should also be accompanied by signs that it is being earnestly dealt with. Since in recitation the standard is oral English of the purest description, there should be no defects of pronunciation; repetition should have given every opportunity to eliminate them. Singing is in a way the poetry of oral expression, but recitation and reading are its prose. In these latter, as in the former, a good full-toned utterance should be cultivated as well as the powers of the memory. In several schools good use appeared to have been made of the recitation as a means of calling attention to choice diction and the cultured expression of thought. The unobservant gaze may move over the landscape of the physical world and come back not enriched; in likewise the unobservant reader may cast his unseeing eyes over the literary gems, which are dull if there be no “subtle exercise of the mind” behind the eye. It is the business of the teacher to call to the conscious notice of the child those apt ways of saying things that make the poetry of the English race a very Johannesburg of riches.

ARITHMETIC.—It is difficult to speak in terms of satisfaction of a subject wherein the Standard VI percentage of success is under forty throughout the district—notwithstanding reduction in the amount required, especially in the upper classes. One of the chief effects of the new syllabus has been to reduce the scope in the upper standards. The power to classify in arithmetic differently from English is not so frequently availed of as the work in arithmetic would suggest to be desirable. In order to get down to the level of the individual pupil there must, at the inception of every new rule, be a very great amount of easy oral work. A teacher satisfied with general impression rarely finds his pupils come up to expectation when taken individually. In the regulations dealing with the common schools of Germany it is directed that “in schools with one or two teachers, as far as possible, and with other schools regularly, all calculations are to be done mentally. In practical applications the relation to every-day life is always to be kept in view, consequently examples with large and many-figured numbers are to be avoided. . . . Arithmetic is to be regarded in all divisions as practice in clear thinking and correct speaking.”

In correspondence with the above regulation it is found that the arithmetic period for each week in German schools is frequently four hours, with a tendency to fewer hours in the higher classes. The reverse tendency appears in our schools. If one looks only to the principle involved there is possible a reduction in the number of figures required to work the type of sums in several cases appearing on the test-cards. The sums in practice may be quoted in illustration. Still there is the other view that the patient and accurate dealing with the larger-figured sums gives a valuable discipline; and since in a number of the schools really good results are obtained in the subject, it must appear that there is shown here a defect in the teaching-methods adopted in the remaining schools—a defect most probably of that patient repetition and recapitulation, of the attention to the boy or girl, not the class, that is so necessary in dealing with the average child. The promotions to Standard I arithmetic seemed not always well advised. All the numbers up to twenty should have been thoroughly analysed and treated by addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and in fractions, in concrete and in abstract, until each was clearly conceived. When a child in Standard I has to count on his fingers in order to add eight and seven, it is manifest that he has been promoted to Standard I before he is ready for the class. All these operations should be mechanical before the child is ready for promotion. The setting forth of the arithmetic, both on slates and on paper, showed improvement in a satisfactory number of schools. The children found more difficulty in the tests set this year for Standard IV than was the case in 1904.

GEOGRAPHY.—Most of the schools in Marlborough are treating geography Course B and history in alternate years. During 1905 geography was chosen. No book or series available during the year dealt with the programme of the syllabus in an adequate manner. An experienced teacher may restrict himself to notes, but a handbook is a good background to the treatment of any theme. It enables each pupil to fill out his individual hiatuses of comprehension. Many of the schools used volumes selected from “The World and its People,” and by some teachers these appear to have been used with judgment, only the valuable parts being emphasized. Other teachers attempted the memorising plan of the large volume adopted, the result being ill both in regard to geography Course B and to the reading. The report of the Council of Fifteen in the United States refers to the old geography as “sailor geography”—a minute description of the coasts of land, its capes, bays, islands, and gulfs. Much of that information is absolutely useless. Therefore a new school arose who taught what may be called encyclopædic geography. This consisted of heterogeneous scraps of information culled from every land from Tashkend to Titicaca; such information might sometimes be interesting, but much of it was useless—dealing with facts that were never likely to benefit the child and served only to load his memory and undermine his health. The new idea of geography has grown from the ruins of the above. It is to some extent still encyclopædic, but at the same time selective, choosing only such topics as may have a bearing on the child’s future—*e.g.*, San Francisco is distant from us but is important in