It has hitherto been our custom, in these reports, to venture some criticism on the method of instruction and the quality of the results in respect of individual subjects, and, though this procedure is less appropriate now than formerly, we shall, for the sake of the less experienced teachers, continue it on the present occasion.

Concerning reading, we note that, while the teaching of the mechanical parts of the subject has greatly improved in recent years, especially in the larger schools where pupils, for the most part, are at once at home in reading books previously unseen, still the reading lesson as such, instead of being instinct with interest and illuminative power, is very often a most monotonous affair. This can only be because the educative value of the reading lesson is not fully understood. By some teachers the truth has not been learned, by others it has been forgotten, that, as an educative factor, the reading lesson is supreme.

The struggle to maintain and improve the quality of handwriting continues, not altogether without success. In a number of schools the home exercises are of a highly creditable description, clear, bold, and well-proportioned writing being accompanied by a moderate amount of ornamental work. Teachers might to a greater extent encourage pupils to apply the principles acquired in the design lessons to the production of ornamental work in their exercise-books. As children are taught, or, at any rate, ought to be taught, the principles of handwriting for seven years or so before they reach Standard VI, it seems hardly necessary that the set writing lesson should be continued in that class. It would be more to the purpose, surely, for the pupils to devote themselves, through the mediums of transcription, dictation, paraphrasing, or note-taking, to the production of ease, speed, and legibility.

There has been in one respect a great improvement in the quality of the composition exercises. In previous years these exercises were to a large extent faultless in form and grammar. But in the degree to which they were faultless, they were very often also lifeless. This defect has been largely remedied by the selection of nature subjects for composition, and one feels while reading th exercises that the thoughts expressed by the pupils have a lively and assertive existence in their minds. In our last annual report we noted the extent to which oral composition is encouraged in American schools. We have not noticed that the hint thrown out has been to any extent fruitful. Oral composition stands in the same relation to written, as mental arithmetic to sum-working; it is the immediate, practical, and indispensable phase of the subject.

The Department's tests in arithmetic were by the majority of teachers considered reasonable, and in many of the schools really good work was done. In their treatment of this subject teachers would do well to keep three aims constantly in mind—(1) how to make numbers live; (2) how to make the few essential principles part and parcel of the pupils' mental furniture; and (3) how to secure the shortest methods compatible with absolute clearness. To these three aims we may add the oft-repeated appropriate means—(1) a combination of fingers (for handling and measuring), figures, and objects during the early stages; (2) the use of short numbers at all stages save the highest, and, at all stages, mental arithmetic and talks about principles.

Many of the teachers have made an honest attempt to understand and to cover the requirements in drawing. What with freehand drawing and model-drawing, memory drawing and object-drawing, practical geometry and descriptive geometry, the teacher's outlook in this subject is surely extensive enough to satisfy the most ambitious. There is, we are convinced, only one way to overtake the drawing syllabus, even approximately, and that is to map out a complete course extending from the Preparatory to the Sixth Class in such a way as to show what is to be done, how it is to be done, and how the various branches of drawing are to be correlated with each other as well as with the other parts of school-work.

Genuine interest was taken in the prescribed course of physical geography, and few now regret the radical change that has been made in the geography course. Discarding text-books as the chief medium of instruction, the teacher now brings his pupils face to face with the workings of nature, leads him to seek for causes and to judge effects. The pupils, on their part, rooted and ground in experience, in all that makes their immediate environment interesting and intelligible, are reasonably prepared to study from map and printed page the geographical conditions of other lands. To be perfectly frank we should say that the text-book has not been entirely discarded. Judiciously used it may perhaps be to some extent permissible, or even advisable. Injudiciously used it will certainly frustrate the intention of the syllabus.

At not a few schools splendid work was done in nature-study. Fortunate indeed are the pupils of such schools, for they have the opportunity of acquiring a taste for a study that will not only sharpen their wits but also prove a life-long solace and pleasure. As for elementary science, it has fared very much as in previous years—*i.e.*, badly. Now that the Department makes liberal grants of material and apparatus to schools doing the right kind of work, we feel confident that a large number of our teachers will see to it that their pupils enjoy the advantages of a really first-hand training in scientific methods.

In the great majority of our schools more or less handwork is done. That it is an essential complement to the other parts of the primary curriculum is now generally recognised. Its effectiveness as an instrument of training varies much in different classes, departments, and schools. In rare cases it stands as a detached subject, in most cases it is to some extent correlated with the rest of the schoolwork, while in yet others the correlation is complete. That the subject has been so rapidly and so widely recognised in our schools is due partly to the desire on the part of the teachers to bring their work up-to-date, and partly to the unflagging zeal of Mr. McCaw.

Physical instruction has been regularly given at all schools during the year, the amount and quality being in most cases satisfactory. We expect the pupils of every school, boys and girls alike, not merely to go through the extension exercises, but also to form fours, and to march in fours, twos, and file. Acting on a hint we threw out last year, a number of teachers correlated the lessons on health, as far as possible, with physical instruction. Mention of the subject