

prove helpful to many. The lightening and remodelling of the syllabus and the power of classifying separately for arithmetic have probably now had some appreciable effect, whilst the fact that the tests set this year were, generally speaking, of a more even character than formerly may also have conduced to better results.

Of 3,646 children in the six different standards, 228 were placed in a lower class for arithmetic, distributed as follows: Standard VI, 53; Standard V, 53; Standard IV, 43; Standard III, 44; Standard II, 27; Standard I, 8. Four pupils in Standard IV and one in Standard III were placed in a higher class for the same subject.

It is noteworthy that the classes that receive most frequently our highest commendation or gravest censure are respectively Standard II (thirty) and Standard VI (nineteen). Last year they were Standard III (twenty-four) and Standard I (eighteen) respectively. Before thorough efficiency is attained considerable improvement must be made in Standards I and VI. Into the latter there is a great temptation to promote undeserving pupils, but this should not apply to Standard I. Success in arithmetic is generally a proof of high teaching-power, and the weakness of many teachers of very small schools (we have forty-one in Grade 0) is clearly seen when we find that only six of these produced satisfactory Standard I work.

GEOGRAPHY.—Though in many of our larger schools praiseworthy attempts have been made in the method of treatment of the A course in geography, still, taking the district as a whole, we are disappointed with the general quality of the work submitted to us, which hardly comes up to last year's standard. One cause of defect would seem to be too great a reliance on mere memorising from a text-book. This failing existed mostly in our small schools. Such treatment, instead of using the subject as one of our greatest educative factors, is rather intensifying evils that existed under the demands of our former syllabus. We admit that under present requirements some of the inferences to be drawn by children from their own observations for certain natural phenomena are perhaps too obscure for the child mind; still, the initial training is absent—viz., instruction in the subject under the methods of observation and experiment. Of course, the observation referred to does not necessarily mean simply a departure from the schoolroom to view local surroundings and natural phenomena. The training must be carefully supervised along correct lines; the observations, in the first instance at any rate, must be special and systematic. "Where the actual phenomena themselves do not come within the range of the children's observation, models should be used if possible"; so reads part of the general directions in the syllabus. A great many of the actual phenomena are necessarily quite outside the children's local horizon; where this would tend to a limited training much can be done with suitable models and with up-to-date illustrations and diagrams, which may nowadays be readily obtained or which are easily constructed. With this advocacy of recent methods we hope to see the text-book laid aside as much as possible as a means of teaching geography. To those not already acquainted with the book we should recommend the perusal of an admirable work by Professor Gregory, entitled "The Teaching of Geography."

READING.—Satisfactory work continues to be done in most of our schools, two literary readers being in general use throughout the district. The chief source of weakness is still the comprehension of the language of the reading-lesson, without which intelligent reading cannot exist. This failing was accentuated and made more evident in the written work in English, where one of the questions dealt specifically with the meaning and use of words. In estimating the work of the standard classes we find in general that the reading of the lower classes is more uniformly good than it is in the higher classes. In the Preparatory classes the reading too often consists in the mere utterance of detached words. We think that almost from the beginning strict attention should be given to "phrasing" and to the intelligent grouping of words. In the higher standards of the school we once again lay stress on the benefit of as wide a reading-course as possible. To this end we are pleased to notice that a number of our schools are furnished with well-equipped libraries. As many of the chief works of our best authors are now obtainable at small cost a small standard library, even if just for purposes of reference, might be established at every school. Committees, if desirous of assisting in the educational progress of the children, can greatly help towards the attainment of this object.

RECITATION.—This subject receives fairly satisfactory treatment, the selections usually being from the reader in use. Too often, however, the mere repetition of the lines learnt seems to be all sufficient. We note from the syllabus: "There is such a wealth of simple and beautiful poetry in English literature that there is no reason to select for repetition verse that is not worth the trouble of learning by heart." Once again we would like to give prominence to the selection of verses for their literary merit.

SPELLING.—Very satisfactory work is still being done in the majority of schools, though the results are again lower than last year's in spite of the fact that more commendation is bestowed for this than for any other subject, thirty schools being marked "good" and four "excellent." It is questionable whether the practice of preparing from only one book has not, by limiting the scope of the work, counteracted the benefit derived from the introduction of word-building, which in the higher standards might well be more systematic. The formation of words from Greek and Latin roots by the addition of prefixes and affixes is too often neglected. A suitable text-book setting forth in well-graduated lessons such work as is suggested in the syllabus for the different classes would be very useful.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—Physical instruction was well carried out during the year, the work in seventy-eight schools being marked as "efficient"; of these, twenty-nine were good and four were excellent. The exercises in most general use are those laid down in the syllabus, though in some of our schools exercises based on the Sandow system of physical culture have been adopted.

We report with much satisfaction that deep-breathing exercises are practised in almost all our schools. If what is now being done in this direction serves to impress upon our rising generation the