

books, three readers will be at once available for use, and provide a large and varied amount of reading-matter.

WRITING.—The writing of the great majority of our schools we regarded as of a satisfactory nature, the copybook in most general use being Collins's New Graphic.

This subject does not now occupy such an important position in the work of the school as was at one time the case, and its combination with spelling, as has lately been done where examination is prescribed, must, we think, act detrimentally to the quality of the work.

SPELLING AND DICTATION, which were tested in the usual way, for the first time in five years were more accurate than in the previous year, and in written composition, too, misspellings were not so common as formerly, our treatment of these as mistakes in composition having perhaps induced teachers to pay more attention to the correction of this form of error. It is of much more importance that the child should be able to spell the words of his every-day vocabulary—the words he commonly speaks and writes—than whole columns of long unfamiliar words whose very difficulty lies in their being but rarely applied. It is questionable whether too much time is not often paid to the mere cram and iteration of spelling and word-building, most certainly so where the exercise through the neglect of sentence-forming (in illustration of the use and meaning of the words under consideration) is entirely divorced from oral composition. Sixty-four schools obtained credit for efficiency in spelling, twenty-two of these being classed good, two very good, and three excellent.

Though in fifty-four, the majority of schools, the composition of all classes showed evidence of sound training, in only eight was the work commended, and, though the result throughout the district was satisfactory, it was not so good as in 1907. The departmental test cards have still been generally employed, allowances being made for those schools that were examined before completion of the year's syllabus of work. To thoroughly test the value of the training given, written exercises, in addition to oral examination, are essential, and for convenience and to avoid loss of time questions must be prepared beforehand. Schemes of work in this subject especially were ill defined, and the Inspectors' whole available time might easily have been spent in discovering their scope for the various classes and setting tests upon them. With the tests set by the Education Department Standard V still finds the greatest difficulty, and that and Standard III were the two weak classes this year. The analysis was too often weak, clear distinctions between phrases and clauses being seldom drawn. As a foundation for such knowledge a clear comprehension of the construction of a simple sentence must first be imparted. This can best be done in a practical way that will tax to the utmost the powers of expression of even the most advanced by essays in which only simple sentences are allowed. With the understanding of a simple sentence thus acquired by practice as well as from theory should readily come a knowledge of the kinds of phrases that have been employed, and of the common link-words that unite two or more simple sentences into a compound one. The next stage, the use of complex sentences in composition, is the natural form of expression into which the child in his previous attempts has repeatedly fallen, and if his errors have been clearly pointed out and rationally explained an acquaintance with clauses (subordinate or dependent sentences), with their necessary connections, will already have been begun, and may be strengthened, and but little repetition of the initial process should be necessary to confirm the knowledge acquired.

Reasons for the correction of faulty sentences are seldom understood, and it is evident that teachers are confining their attention exclusively to examples and paying too little regard to the course of work defined in the syllabus, and but little to the grammatical constructions, a knowledge of which is implied in that course. We certainly think it would be better to revert to some clearly defined elementary course of grammar, provided that it has a direct bearing upon composition.

In Standard III the essay-writing upon familiar objects or easy topics had evidently been much neglected. Too much attention is apparently paid to the production of a story or description, in which the memory may play the major part and afford the child little opportunity for the employment of his own vocabulary. In essay-writing and in oral composition his descriptive power may be better developed and the faults of daily speech corrected. We were pleased to note improvement in the oral composition of Standard I, but the practice is too often confined to that class, and not continued as it should be throughout the school. From the diffident, disjointed replies we often receive to oral questions put to the higher classes we conclude that the value of answering in complete sentences is not yet sufficiently appreciated as an educational factor.

We also advise the junior members of the profession to be very choice with the tone of their own English, as their modes and terms of expression are constantly before the children as models, and we have too frequently been surprised at the teacher's mispronunciation of certain words selected from the children's reading-books. We should not consider it beneath the dignity of youthful teachers to be frequently found consulting a standard dictionary.

The children in our Grade 0 or smallest schools—that is, those under the control of teachers of the least experience—find the greatest difficulty with the study of composition, which among the subjects of English stands a queen supported by attendant handmaids, and success in her court is a sure criterion of skill in the teacher.

We should strongly commend to every teacher's notice that section of Mr. Petrie's last report that treats of composition.

ARITHMETIC.—We find that our estimate places fifty-seven schools as having done efficient work. We are pleased indeed to note that this number is a great improvement on the number, thirty, reported by us as efficient during 1907. Of the standard classes Standard II alone shows a slight falling-off. The quality of the work in Standards V and VI is still capable of much improvement. Standard V still maintains its position of special weakness, and in some cases the failure of this class was almost general. It is somewhat of a mystery to us why year after year