

Standard V should be the weakest class in arithmetic. We notice that in some other educational districts a similar failing is recorded. From the data of some years it becomes more evident that the range of work in Standard V is so extensive as to in some measure account for the difficulty experienced. While the practical side of arithmetic receives a due share of attention in some schools, we think that in Standards V and VI more might be done in this direction to enable pupils to more clearly realise the meaning of the problems set in mensuration, &c. It is this inability to correctly interpret the wording of the problem, oftentimes very simple in itself, that we consider one of the chief causes of pupils in Standards V and VI coming to grief. How often is failure due to the fact that the phraseology of the question varies slightly from the uniform wording of dozens of similar problems many times correctly worked by the pupil! Again, how often does the Standard VI boy, perhaps perfect in his book knowledge, show to the poorest advantage when faced by the every-day interest problem of the business man, or when the workman places before him a common calculation in ordinary mensuration! While it is generally conceded that in arithmetic the abstract provides the highest mental training, we think that greater familiarity with practical every-day problems would lead to a greater readiness in dealing with many branches of the subject. While thus recommending the judicious use of practical work, we at once admit that its use may readily be overdone, and, though appealing to the pupil on account of the more gradual mental effort necessary, may often, after all, be of little educational value. The practical carried to excess reduces arithmetic entirely to the level of a technical subject.

We fully see the difficulty of carrying out this side of arithmetical instruction in the majority of our schools which are conducted by sole teachers; but when we come to consider the amount of time usually set apart on the time-table for this subject we do think that the results obtained in these two Standards V and VI this year can be bettered considerably under favourable teaching-conditions. The work of Standard I, we are pleased to say, shows distinct improvement, and both in this standard and in Standard II we once more strongly advocate liberal practice in mental work and the familiarising of pupils with easy problems in concrete form.

Two hundred and ninety pupils took the arithmetic of a lower class than that in which they were placed for English, the numbers in the various standards being as follows: S6, 31; S5, 73; S4, 51; S3, 65; S2, 68; S1, 2.

DRAWING.—In eighty-five schools drawing is regarded as being satisfactorily taught. The many branches are well taken up, and in the tests set by us at the time of our annual visit the results on the whole were very commendable.

Drawing from objects has much improved, and, though possible of being regarded as a separate branch, is in many cases taken in co-ordination with nature-study.

Drawing by the aid of instruments admits of much fuller treatment, while the model-drawing of Standard VI, especially in the smaller schools, is still a weak branch. A preliminary judicious course in object-drawing, in which the principle of perspective is not made too prominent, might be profitably undertaken before attempting to draw the ordinary conventional forms. The actual model-drawing should proceed by carefully graduated exercises from the common geometrical models, the principle of vanishment being strongly demonstrated. In this connection we should be very pleased to see all our schools furnished with sets of the more common geometrical forms. Many schools are already fully provided in this way, but the uses of such models are so many that we should like to see them a matter of general equipment. Again, in the matter of design we urge the advisability of teaching general principles upon which design is based. As geometrical construction is the necessary foundation to this, the accurate use of ruler and compasses should be insisted on from the earliest stages. In Standard VI we have demanded a fair proportion of each branch of work, the model or solid geometry being regarded as occupying about one-half of the full course.

We still think the varieties of drawing laid down too many for all to be very effectively covered, and should like to see some curtailment made that might limit certain branches to alternate years and yet not materially reduce the range of work.

SINGING is now taught in all but five schools. In seventy-two we consider the subject efficient, and, of these, twenty were recorded as doing good work.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION is universally taken, the instruction of only eight schools falling below a satisfactory standard, while in thirty-nine the work was deemed good. Cadet companies or detachments now exist at all our larger schools, and the military drill is with few exceptions performed with a considerable degree of thoroughness and precision. Where the cadet company has been fully established it should prove a most effective factor in upholding school discipline.

HISTORY.—History has been treated in much the same manner as during the previous three years. We again recommend to teachers the great advisability of drawing up a syllabus of work in this subject based on some continuity or sequence of the events taken.

GEOGRAPHY.—Geography still continues to be by far the weakest subject of the curriculum. We cannot look upon the results as at all commensurate with the amount of time and instruction bestowed upon the subject, but would rather regard the difficulty as inherent in the syllabus in its present form. Much of the mathematical course is of such evident difficulty to children that a rearrangement of the work with certain modifications would produce greater efficiency though over a more limited range of work. The B course, too, seems to us to lend itself to a vague and indefinite scheme of work that is perhaps intended to be covered in an incidental manner, a style of treatment that seems to us so disconnected that it must ever lack any degree of thoroughness.

ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.—Nature-study or science, the latter comprising an elementary course of physical experiments as detailed in the syllabus, was taken with very satisfactory results in fifty-eight schools, ten being specially commended for method and scope of work. As we have few opportunities of being present when the lessons are given, some of which can only be taken to the best advantage outside the walls of the schoolroom, the teacher should not fail to retain with