

66, and for the lower 20. As the corresponding percentages last year were 49 and 32 respectively, this advance must be gratifying both to teachers and to scholars. A scrutiny of the marks obtained shows that 82 per cent. of the pupils qualified for the proficiency certificate in arithmetic, and 81 per cent. in composition, results that are very satisfactory indeed. It is to be noted that of nineteen schools unrepresented at the Sixth Standard examinations all but one were "sole teacher" schools.

According to the Inspector's estimate of their efficiency the schools are grouped as follows: Good to excellent, 42 schools, with 4,342 pupils; satisfactory, 15 schools, with 545 pupils; fair, 16 schools, with 474 pupils; moderate, 2 schools, with 35 pupils. Of a total of 76 schools, 58, with 4,887 pupils, are in a satisfactory condition, the remaining 18 schools, with 509 pupils, ranking below satisfactory. The corresponding figures last year were 53 schools, with 4,550 pupils, and 23 schools, with 645 pupils. With three exceptions the schools that failed to reach the satisfactory stage are single-handed schools, and of the latter there is only one in which an excuse for partial inefficiency might be accepted on the ground that the number of pupils and of classes was too great for one teacher to manage successfully.

Something must now be said of the quality of the subjects of instruction. In general the pupils make a good appearance in reading. It must be said, however, that the progress made in reading by the infant classes in many of the smaller schools is not so rapid as it should be. It is not always recognised that, as many young children on first coming to school are unable to speak plainly, they need careful training in the use of their vocal organs. The neglect from which they have suffered in their home training must be made good in the schoolroom, and the teacher must with infinite patience and tact encourage the little ones to overcome their difficulties. Teaching them to speak should come before teaching them to read. From the very first it is possible for the bright and resourceful teacher to make the simplest lessons of the primers real and interesting. One teacher makes "The cat sat on the mat" just so many words to be monotonously repeated over and over again, while another has every face eager with delight as each little one tells of his own cat, and of the mat at the door, and of the mat in front of the fire at home where pussy dozes. What opportunities for the training of the children in the right use of the mother-tongue are lost by the unthinking teacher at this stage of the child's school life! And if it is allowed that the reading of the youngest child is to be taken on these lines, it goes without saying that as he passes upwards his training must continue on the same lines. Are we never to have done with the discredited and deadening routine—"pattern-reading" of the paragraph by the teacher—simultaneous reading of the same by the pupils, with just the same mechanical risings and fallings of the "pattern"—and then the individual pupil's rendering of this parrot exercise? Happily there is less of this now; the sooner it goes altogether the better. If the pupil knows what he is reading, he will bring out the meaning in his own way, and we need not worry because he drops his voice at this comma or at that; the main thing is that he does understand and that he does try in his own way to express the thought of the passage. There will always be the need for "pattern-reading" by the teacher. The ease and fluency of his reading, the clearness of his enunciation, the pleasing quality of his tone, the more telling expression based upon his keener appreciation of the beauty of the passage, will stir within the hearts of his pupils a desire to rival his attainment. In the poetry selected for recitation the pupils might well be expected to deliver their lines with a higher degree of elocutionary effect than they have attained to in the past. It was unfortunate that in former syllabuses the term "repetition" occurred so often; it meant less in the minds of most teachers than the term "recitation" which is now used, but the distinction has not been fully appreciated.

Spelling is assiduously prepared, and the writing of dictation as a test of spelling is well done in most schools. In a good many cases the time-tables show that an unduly large proportion of the school time is given to spelling and dictation—more time, indeed, than to instruction and practice in composition. Of course, the writing of passages to dictation might well form part of the training of the composition, as the pupils are expected to punctuate what they have written. In general practice the value of this exercise as a means of training in punctuation—an exercise involving, as one would think, an intelligent comprehension of the subject-matter—is altogether lost, as the teacher, in order apparently to save the pupils the trouble of thinking of the meaning, by little tricks of voice-inflection indicates the stops to be used almost as definitely as if he had named them.

The quality of the handwriting varies greatly from school to school. In some schools it is excellent; in very few is it really bad. On the whole, the pupils that pass through all the standards leave school with the ability to write a good legible hand with a fair amount of speed; and, as the qualities of penmanship most to be desired for every-day purposes are legibility and speed, there is reason to be satisfied that these qualities are generally found in the writing of our boys and girls.

In the syllabus composition is grouped with reading, spelling, and writing, under the heading of "English," and some of the remarks made in preceding paragraphs have touched on points to be considered in the teaching of composition. Some of the best of our infant-mistresses are doing very fine work in training the children in oral expression. The pity is that the training is not always continued and amplified as the children pass up through the standard classes. In the Inspector-General's report of his visits to schools in Europe and America he gives very striking examples of what came under his notice in this matter of training in oral expression. The first of his "general conclusions" has also reference to this, and so pertinent is his statement that no excuse is needed for quoting it here in full. Mr. Hogben says, "In most foreign countries the mother-tongue receives much more attention, and is more thoroughly taught, than in our schools, special effort being directed, with considerable success, to training the power of self-expression through oral speech on all subjects, beginning with those which have formed the matter of observation by the pupils; this leads also to clearness of thought. It is emphasized alike in primary and secondary schools; it develops literary taste as well as thoroughness and logical method." When our teachers have fully recognised the claims of oral expression to a larger share of their attention, they will find their pupils bringing to their efforts in written composition a freedom and ease that have not been conspicuous in the past. It must not be inferred that the teachers