

this kind interesting, but a treatment of it may be in a high degree fruitful in spite of the lack of interest. The substitution of single words for phrases or clauses, and *vice versa*, is an exercise of but little value that has unfortunately been much encouraged by the Department's questions.

The teaching of arithmetic is, in the main, satisfactory, and in many of the larger schools it is good. Mr. Garrard reports thus: "In general, arithmetic is soundly taught. The work of Standard II and Standard V is still the most difficult to deal with, but teachers are paying more attention to oral work in the lower standards, with the result that Standard II is improving. It is chiefly in the smaller country schools that the higher standards come to grief in this subject. More mental arithmetic and a clear setting-out of the various steps in the sums will go far to improve matters." Mr. Plummer writes, "In perhaps half of the schools this important subject is dealt with in a very successful manner. In the other half there is plenty of room for improvement. In many cases the errors are due, not to ignorance of the rules, but to inaccuracy in working. Weak discipline often accounts for this. The weakness in this subject is frequently due to the misguided kindness of teachers in being always ready to 'help lame dogs over stiles.' When the children meet with a little difficulty these teachers immediately rush to their assistance and help them over the obstacle. Far better would it be to let them overcome the difficulty themselves, which they will be able to do if the rule has been properly taught, and if sufficient time is allowed. A difficulty overcome by the unaided exertion of the pupil ceases to be a difficulty for the future. Very often insufficient use of the blackboard may account for the weakness in arithmetic. Not only should the teacher use the blackboard, but the individual pupil should be required to work out the whole or part of the problem on it, and his classmates should be called on in turn to explain the why and wherefore of each step. Mental arithmetic should be freely made use of not only to test a child's knowledge of rules learnt, but also in the teaching of new principles. This part of the subject, I am afraid, cannot be reported as satisfactory."

Mr. Cox writes, "Arithmetic is a subject in which the results are very varied. I have found, however, that where the mental work was good the written work was invariably of the same character. I am still of the opinion that mental arithmetic is not receiving sufficient attention. It is such a valuable aid in the introduction of new work and in the recapitulation of that already overtaken that its daily use would render unnecessary the laborious slate-revision so much indulged in. By the judicious use of mental arithmetic half the rules with which a child has to wrestle may be passed in review daily. The mental arithmetic I have given has been more a test of method than of 'short cuts,' and I have not considered it satisfactory unless a child could explain with some intelligence how the answer was arrived at."

At the central examination for certificates of proficiency (work of Standard VI) a large body of excellent work was received, and, on the whole, the paper was quite satisfactorily done. The chief faults were inaccuracies of working or in copying work, inability to place correctly the decimal point in division sums, and excessive condensation in the solution of problems, leading to want of clearness and system in setting out the successive steps in the reasoning and working. Methods were not often at fault, occasional mistakes in the statement of a proportion sum being the only exception of any note. At examinations of this kind a clear and full setting-out of the steps and the reasoning should always be considered important, and many candidates would gain higher marks if trained to attend to this point.

In a number of the larger schools all the arithmetical work of the Standard VI class is now done on paper. This is a practice that might with great advantage become universal in this class at least. It is a stimulus to neat work, and allows of ready reference to former corrections and criticisms, thus helping to make pupils more careful by making them more sensible of their failure to benefit by former instruction. For such work cheap unruled exercise-books can now be easily procured. The use of separate sheets is not to be commended.

In Standard II the numbers to be dealt with are restricted to 1,000. The field of work is kept thus narrow on purpose that as far as possible the calculations should be made mentally, the answers being given orally or merely recorded on slate or paper. Many teachers, it seems to me, do not sufficiently realize that the arithmetic of this class should be predominantly treated in this way, and consequently use an amount of calculation on slates that is far in excess of what is useful or helpful.

The Board's desire that more attention should be given to instruction in the political and commercial aspects of geography has been given effect to in considerable measure in the course of the year. Owing to the uncertain purport of the regulations dealing with geography, the examination for the certificate of proficiency practically ignored this branch of the subject for some years past, though in the class examinations of Standard VI it did receive a fair measure of attention. The result was that course A received excessive prominence in the instruction. By direction of the Board, the examination for certificates of proficiency this year included a certain specified amount of general geography, and this has in general been satisfactorily taught. This change appeared to me to strain the meaning of the regulations, and it was solely for that reason that I did not think it advisable to introduce it on my own authority. Whether this opinion was well founded or not need not be discussed here, and the change can be welcomed as likely to make the teaching of geography in the public schools more useful and practical.

Speaking of this subject, Mr. Stewart says, "Geography is not taught in a satisfactory manner. There is far too much book-work and too little direct observation of nature. It is clearly the intention of the syllabus that in the main it (course A is meant) should be taught as a branch of nature-study. In our large town schools conditions interfere very largely with such a method, but many of the country schools could carry out this branch of nature work to great advantage. In the small one-teacher schools it should always find a place in the scheme of work. The teaching of geography B is now receiving more adequate attention, and if teachers adopt the combined method of oral lessons and the reading of suitable books, I see no reason why satisfactory progress should not be made."