

We are not satisfied with the recitation in some of our schools. In many cases teachers show lack of judgment in their selection of pieces, and in other cases the pieces have not been thoroughly learned by heart. There is a tendency to underrate the value of recitation, not only as an aid to composition and to clear and distinct enunciation in reading, but as a means of storing in the mind of the child at least a few of the literary masterpieces of the mother-tongue. There is, moreover, no reason why teachers should for this purpose confine themselves to poetry, as there is now available a wide range of school editions of standard authors from which suitable prose selections can be made. Spelling generally is good, and in writing our reports show that in only some 10 per cent. of our schools is there decided room for improvement. In composition we reserve the term "good" for those essays in which there is not only freedom from errors of construction, but, in addition, both originality in the method of treatment and the use of language appropriate to the thoughts to be expressed. We recognise the difficulty of obtaining these desirable results—a difficulty noted in practically all English-speaking communities, and while there is no doubt that racial peculiarities account for much of this lack of facility in verbal expression, still much can be done in our schools by continued attention to oral work and by the better conception of the fact that every lesson is a language lesson. Intimately connected with all the English work is the question of reading-books. The *School Journal* has done much to improve and add interest to the reading, more particularly in the smaller schools, where pupils have fewer opportunities of general reading. In the matter of the so-called "free school-books" we are somewhat sceptical of the benefits of the present system. As a matter of fact, the books are only nominally free, for in practice the Board is unable to avail itself of the option of allowing the children to take the books home. Such a course would necessitate a practically fresh supply every year, and after the original grant the Department provides for the renewal of only some 10 per cent. of the original supply to meet ordinary wear and tear. Thus the stimulating effect on the child of the actual possession of a new book is lost. This is a point on which teachers, infant-mistresses especially, lay great stress. In arithmetic the results are practically the same as they were last year: Standards I to IV, satisfactory to good; Standard V, moderate to fair. It is hardly necessary to reiterate here our opinion as to the reason for the perennially indifferent results of Standard V. Under the present syllabus, handwork, realistic work in geography, practical and individual work in elementary science, and nature-study all make more demands on the teacher's and pupil's time than formerly, and the utmost that can be spared for arithmetic is five hours per week, while many schemes of work allow only four. Yet we have no hesitation in saying that so far as this district is concerned the present Standard V test is equivalent to the Standard VI test of sixteen years ago, when the ordinary time-table allowance for arithmetic was seven to seven hours and a half per week, and in many instances even this was exceeded. The subject will in all probability come prominently before the conferences already mentioned, and we sincerely trust that such modifications will be made in its scope and distribution through the standard course as will give no excuse or encouragement for the present sacrifice of method to matter. We are pleased to note that much of the A course geography is being treated as experimental nature-study, while the subjects of the B course are also being treated in a more satisfactory manner. Those teachers were most successful who made the local industries the basis of their work. This naturally led to Dominion exports, trade routes, great commercial centres, exchange of products, while the Dominion imports completed the cycle. We cannot, however, make a real success of a subject so essentially scientific until it is recognised that first-hand observation and experiment, wide reading, and careful study, must form the teacher's preparation. We are not fond of school text-books, and in the matter of geography particularly we have no hesitation in saying that text-books have done much to nullify the benefits we should otherwise have derived from the new syllabus. We have in previous reports recorded our opinion that alternative courses in history are a mistake. That history is no longer a compulsory subject for a teacher's certificate appears to us to be not only illogical but short-sighted. In drawing we have in all cases strongly recommended the substitution of common natural objects for the old conventional flat copy. Drawing in all its branches has no doubt an important bearing on the æsthetic training of the young, but in the drawing scheme of the primary school the chief aim should not be the training of every child as a potential artist but the cultivation in him of drawing as means of everyday expression. As a matter of fact, we think that drawing as an educational subject would benefit by the disappearance from the syllabus of all compulsory tests necessitating the use of geometrical models or conventional forms of any kind.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—In most of our schools breathing-exercises are taken daily; and physical drill, consisting mainly of free exercises and exercises with wands or clubs, is generally satisfactory. It is in only a few schools that the mark given is "fair." The "Manual of Physical Exercises" issued by the Department is a most useful guide, but in some schools better results would be obtained if more attention were paid to the general remarks at the beginning of the Manual, and to the hints given for the instruction of children from five to eight years of age and for the breathing-exercises. Swimming is taught in a number of schools both in the city and in the country, and during the year there was a very satisfactory increase in the number of claims for capitation. Military drill is taken in the larger schools, in most of which the reports range from "good" to "very good." The establishment of miniature rifle ranges should give an impetus to the cadet movement. The thanks of the Board are due to the officers of the Wellington Garrison for the interest they have shown in the shooting competitions of the cadets.

NEEDLEWORK.—In a few schools in the country where a male teacher is in charge sewing is not taught, but on inquiry it was found that it was difficult to get a competent person willing to undertake the instruction. In other cases the requirements of the syllabus are met in a satisfactory manner. In view of the difference of opinion which exists as to the respective values of samples or garments it may be interesting to quote the instructions of the English Code for 1909. "Needlework should be so taught as to secure a practical knowledge of sewing, cutting out, and making ordinary garments, to-