

tinently disappointing. This to some extent is undoubtedly due to the many and great demands on the teacher's attention, and hence to the relatively limited time available for direct personal teaching. Still, we consider that more might be done in these schools by connecting the study of number with language lessons and other school-work, and by utilizing opportunities as they present themselves towards the end in view. The great importance of mental drill in the earlier stages of arithmetic-teaching is strongly insisted on in a paper read by Mr. Marshall Jackman before the Imperial Education Conference of last year. Mr. Jackman, a teacher of long experience, is strongly of opinion that all arithmetic-teaching for pupils below ten years should be oral. Some years ago he determined to test his theory, and "decided to withdraw the teaching of all but the simplest of arithmetic processes from the curriculum of classes below what is known as the Fourth Standard in our elementary schools." (Below Standard IV would mean in this case normal children below the age of ten years.) "I decided," he adds, "to confine my syllabus in these classes to mental work, and directed that no complex processes should be taught. Simple questions were to be answered orally or on paper, and all problems set were to be simple and easily understood. The numbers used were to be such as the children could readily grasp." The results of this experiment, which have had ample time to declare themselves, have been most encouraging, and have won the approval of the Chief Inspector of Schools for London and other authorities well qualified to pronounce judgment on the matter. It is unwise, however, to reach conclusions from the result of a single experiment, and it may be that Mr. Jackman, being an enthusiast and perhaps working under specially favourable conditions, was able to accomplish more than could reasonably be expected from the average school. But there seems little doubt that more oral work is needed in the lower classes, where arithmetic in general should be of a simpler character than usually obtains under present conditions. Standard I was for the most part tested orally, and did not always give encouraging results, pointing to insufficient mental drill, and possibly to teaching-methods failing to appreciate the thoroughness which the initial stages of arithmetic demand. The appearance made in Standards II, V, and VI was not always satisfactory. In the first two of these groups the syllabus makes large demands on the intelligence and power of application of pupils, which it is hoped the amended regulations about to be issued will to some extent reduce. A large number of the failures in the examination for Standard VI certificates was due to pronounced weakness in arithmetic.

GEOGRAPHY.—The instruction given in Course A is not always satisfactory, owing largely to an unduly extensive use of text-book and to a somewhat limited reliance on local conditions. There are few schools in this district where the activity and result of natural forces cannot be observed and where pupils are unable to gain some knowledge of cause and effect from their own experience. The work of river and sea, the effect of heat and cold, wind and rain, the action of the atmosphere in bringing about slow or rapid changes in environment, can all be observed and noted. In this, as in other kindred subjects, the value lies not so much in the actual knowledge acquired as in the process of acquisition; not so much in the thing taught as in the method applied. Much of the work in all classes, but specially in Standards II, III, and IV, is merely nature-study, and, as such, should rest on a basis of experiment and observation. Text-books may be, indeed are, essential so far as the teacher is concerned, but tend to defeat the object of the instruction when placed in the hands of pupils. We have no great objection to their use in Standards V and VI, but feel strongly that they should be carefully avoided in the lower classes, where in nearly every case local conditions will supply the groundwork for suitable and stimulating courses of instruction. Course B, we are glad to say, is slowly acquiring the importance it undoubtedly deserves, and teachers are beginning to realize that the use of the text-book, unaided by a definite scheme of well-selected lessons duly impressed by vivid personal teaching, cannot result in enabling pupils to acquire such equipment of geographical knowledge as boys and girls should possess before leaving school.

HISTORY AND CIVICS.—In some schools too much reliance still continues to be placed on the reading-book, with the result that little real grasp of the subject has been acquired. As we have stated in former reports, history requires to be taught; to rely on the historical reading-book and omit oral teaching is to court disaster. As in the case of geography, to which reference has already been made, a definite course of history, based on the reading-book if need be, should be plotted out early in the year and impressed through the medium of oral teaching. Where teachers have realized this, knowledge and appreciation of the storied past and of the lessons to be learnt therefrom formed a marked characteristic of the effort. Instruction in civics is well carried out in many of the schools, wisely chosen and comprehensive courses—in some cases having their roots in Standard III—being treated with highly gratifying fullness and success. In view of present-day conditions, social unrest, labour troubles, demands for improved sanitation, fierce industrial and commercial competition, there can be no doubt of the importance of this phase of history. The responsibilities which lie before our young people, the majority of whom carry their education no further than the primary-school stage, and many of whom fail to reach Standard VI, render it all the more necessary for the primary school to supply such teaching as will help to equip them with some understanding of the principles which underlie efforts at social reform, and with some knowledge of elementary economic laws, and so will enable them worthily to discharge the rights and privileges of citizenship. To this end it would be wise to include in the programmes of instruction some consideration of such subjects as "law of supply and demand," "conditions regulating wages," "purchasing-power of money," "functions of the Arbitration Court and Conciliation Board," "causes of unemployment, with some of the suggested remedies," "true significance of strikes," and other similar topics which will readily occur to those to whom the possibilities of the subject appeal. Instruction of the kind must of necessity be elementary in character and treatment, but there seems no reason why pupils leaving our schools with a Sixth Standard certificate should not have a reasonable, intelligent, and interested appreciation of the significance of these highly important matters.