

out, we do not observe any common defect general throughout the whole district, though noticeable weaknesses are peculiar to certain localities. In one part there may be difficulty with the aspirate, in another a tendency to overemphasize unimportant or merely connective words, while in a third locality indistinct enunciation may predominate. As a matter of experience, we have found common errors associated in this way, and in many of these instances we believe that the corrective influence of the schoolroom is largely counteracted by outside factors. One point in the teaching of the reading-lesson in the lower classes of the school we would again lay stress on—namely, correct phrasing in the early stages of learning to read. The habit of pointing out the words by the pupils seems to us to act in direct opposition to this end. This practice, if allowable at all, should be used only in the initial stages, and should be discontinued as soon as possible. In quite a number of schools we are pleased to record an improvement in the progress of the preparatory pupils in reading, particularly in their promotion to more advanced work, instead of wearily marking time in a reader which they are quite fitted to leave behind.

With the incoming year the old issue of free text-books comes to an end, and, in place of the miscellaneous readers previously supplied, free continuous readers will be provided for all classes in the school. These readers, together with the *School Journal*, should do much to stimulate the reading-habit; but we do not think that they can entirely supplant a well-graded miscellaneous reader in those stages of a child's school life where reading aloud is the best test by which the teacher is able to measure the progress of the pupil in gaining a knowledge of his mother-tongue. Nevertheless, we hope to see the fullest use made of these admirable readers, and as they are specially suitable for silent reading we would urge a definite treatment under due supervision of this phase of the work.

*Spelling.*—The results in this subject were not quite up to the standard reached last year. This fact is perhaps to some extent accounted for by the conditions under which it was necessary to issue the free readers. The inability of the pupil to take home the reader removes a ready means of familiarizing himself with many words that are necessarily new to him. We are fully aware that the teaching of spelling is nowadays looked upon by many as of minor importance. The incidental learning of spelling, however, has in practice proved to be a failure, and we cannot see any objection to regular preparation on the part of the pupil, so long as it is wisely directed by the teacher. It is not only with difficult words that errors occur, but frequently in the composition of the upper standards the simplest words are carelessly misspelt.

*Composition* we have found to be satisfactory in 79 per cent. of our schools. In Standards V and VI the quality of the work was not equal to that of the other classes. Oral composition does not receive the amount of attention its importance demands. It is usually regularly taken in the junior classes, not specially considered in the middle division of the school, and receives but little definite treatment in the highest standards. Frequent practice in oral composition is regarded as the best foundation for all instruction in composition. In the teaching of written composition too much time is devoted to mere tinkering with phrases, clauses, and sentences. A knowledge of phrases and clauses and of their functions is certainly necessary, but a much greater part of the time might be given to written work, and to dealing with errors that actually occur in the experience of the pupils. It is routine drill in detail that robs the exercise of interest. Ease in writing comes from writing, not from the close study of formal text-books. A too brief perusal of many schemes of work on this subject convinces us that the teaching lacked method, and that the schemes were drawn up without the necessary reflective study on the part of the teacher. Difficulties again presented themselves in the form of some of the questions set in the tests for Standard VI. In many cases they were barren of result in obtaining any estimate of the pupil's knowledge of English at this the final stage of his primary-school career. The general adoption of a wider programme of [reading should in time make a marked improvement in the written composition.

In this connexion it is pleasing to notice that during the year several schools have given particular attention to the school library. This interest has been largely stimulated by the policy of the Board in subsidizing moneys locally raised for library purposes. Not only has the number of libraries increased, but many already in existence have been enabled to have material additions made to the books already on hand. Provision has now been made by the Education Department for paying subsidies on voluntary contributions for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, or increasing the utility of school and class libraries. We hope to see the time when every school will have its library, and the pupils in the higher classes at least devote a regular period of time to the study of standard works. The present age has to some extent fallen into a state of neglect in this respect, and in its devotion to newer amusements and lighter pastimes tends to become at least less well informed on subjects of general importance than would be the case if the course we advocate were more generally adopted.

*Writing.*—In general the writing presented to us was of a satisfactory nature, though in a few cases where the discipline of the school was not what it ought to be, or where lax supervision predominated, the result was poor. In this subject there is no excuse for any school falling below a satisfactory standard, for up to this point at least the writing should be just as good as the teacher likes to make it by regular practice, careful oversight, and uniform discipline. In the preparatory classes of some schools we have had to call attention to the inordinate amount of time devoted to writing on slates. Where this habit maintains, the exercise would seem to be repeated not for its utility as practice in writing, but really to occupy the time of the pupil. It is unnecessary to point out the obvious evils of such a practice, nor the wisdom of varying the exercises for these young pupils as much as possible, where any fixed occupation very quickly becomes irksome, and so of little educational benefit. Considerable attention should at all convenient times be given to the proper formation of figures.

*Geography.*—We believe that the intent of the geography scheme is beginning to be more fully appreciated. In many schools admirable lessons are given on various topics included under the