

set for the composition exercise, and we have received some good essays on more difficult subjects—as, for example, the discussion of a proverb, a poetical quotation, an imaginary episode, and the like. Probably the weakest feature in the exercises handed in at our examinations is the arrangement of the matter, and we urge teachers to give more consideration to this important part of the subject. Punctuation also needs more careful attention.

*Arithmetic.*—Last year we expressed the hope that the revision of the syllabus would result in improved treatment of arithmetic, but in our inspection visits we found little evidence that any change had been made in this respect. Though we are prepared to admit that this is due in some few cases to indifference on the part of teachers, yet we are very strongly of the opinion that the faults observed mainly arise from traditional methods of testing the result of the work. So long as rigid tests of the old-fashioned text-book variety are required—and the tests for Standard VI, scholarship, and other public examinations differ but little from those of a generation ago—so long will the work remain unintelligent and mechanical. The brisk oral and mental work which is acknowledged to be the most necessary part of a rational treatment of arithmetic will never be regarded as of primary importance in the teaching of this subject while in Standard VI only twenty marks out of 200 are allotted to mental arithmetic.

*Geography and History.*—In the treatment of geography and history the influence of the war is naturally and very properly in great evidence. He is indeed a poor teacher whose methods and lessons have not been stimulated by the tremendous happenings which are of almost daily occurrence. In the case of geography this renewed interest and improved treatment have been along quite necessary lines, as the greater prominence given in what is now the old syllabus to the mathematical and physical side of geography has for years past had a tendency to encourage neglect of the political and commercial branches. But though we still meet with some instances of lack of proper oral treatment and use of the map, the efficiency mark as a whole is rarely less than satisfactory, while in the majority of cases the subject is commended.

In history and civics the results are still somewhat disappointing, and the reason for this is, in our opinion, not far to seek. If there is to be anything of real educative benefit in the teaching of history, then history must consist in something more than the mere memorizing of disconnected, or even connected, historical facts and dates. A fact in history—or in any other subject, for that matter—about which the child is unable to think can be of little educative benefit, direct or indirect, to the mind of the child, and too much of our so-called history-teaching consists of memorizing and nothing else. And this, again, is largely due to our system of written examination, which even in the primary school is made the real and ultimate test of all our teaching-work. Take, for example, the recent examinations for Junior National Scholarships and junior free places. Undoubtedly the standard and requirements of these examinations dominate the teaching in all our primary schools. The scholarship history questions for this examination, eight in number, had to be so framed that they came within the comprehension and scope of instruction of over two thousand candidates, representing schools in all portions of the Dominion. To meet these conditions the questions have of necessity to be within certain stereotyped lines, with the natural result that the teaching follows on similar stereotyped lines. In this matter we get little or no help from secondary or university teaching, for there the treatment of the subject is relatively just as “scrappy” and just as subordinated to examination requirements as it is in our primary schools. Not the least of the many lessons that the war will teach us will be the mischievous and fundamental mistake of confining the instruction of a nation solely to its own history, while the history of the rest of the world remains a closed book.

*Drawing and Handwork.*—Our estimate of the drawing examined by us is not more than satisfactory on the whole, and we believe that this is due to the fact that the subject is in somewhat of a transition stage, rather than to any laxity of effort on the part of the teacher. The old flat copies have almost completely disappeared, and the drawing of natural and fashioned objects has taken their place. It is in the choice of objects that the teachers seem to have failed. We find, for example, in a city school, drawings of the same objects in the books of S5 and S1, and the S5 drawing shows but little advance on that of S1. If the object-drawing is to be a success, teachers must see that the pupils are given a series of objects carefully graded from class to class, and that the demands made upon the children are of a progressive nature. We believe also that with the object-drawing there should be given a small proportion of symmetrical designs of a conventional nature. Mass drawing in crayon has in a few schools almost entirely replaced pencil outlines. In these schools we invariably find good representation of the objects drawn, and the teachers themselves, as well as the pupils, derive much satisfaction from the work. Drawing with instruments is fair only. During the coming year we hope to see improvement in this part of the subject.

Some form of handwork is taken by all schools above Grade 0, and our estimate of the work done varies from satisfactory to very good. We believe that the teachers as a whole are altering their point of view with regard to handwork, and that the educational aspect of constructive work is gradually emerging. As a result we expect in the future that handwork will be more fully co-ordinated with drawing and with the other subjects of instruction. Pupils of the city and suburban schools, the district high schools, and two large country schools have attended classes in woodwork. Of the city and suburban schools, Mr. Howe, Senior Instructor, says in his report, “In spite of changes in the staff the work has progressed fairly well, and the manual dexterity throughout the district reached a high standard towards the end of the year.” During the last term the ordinary woodwork programme was suspended, and the boys gave up their time to making splints for the hospital ship “Marama.” In his letter of thanks Lieut.-Colonel Cook says, “The splints are beautifully made, and reflect the greatest credit on the boys and their instructors.” Cookery and domestic economy are taken by the girls of the schools where the boys attend woodwork classes, and the work of the year is regarded as good.