

Of the thirty-four public schools, twenty-three are under the charge of sole teachers, a considerable number of whom are uncertificated. The teachers as a body, however, are attentive to their duties, receptive of suggestion, and eager to adopt methods intended to secure efficiency. A large number attended the recent examinations with a view to improving their educational status.

*Efficiency.*—The quality of the instruction varies in the schools, and in general is fairly satisfactory. Eight schools were recorded as good, and five as failing to reach a satisfactory standard. It may here be noted that several important defects, instanced by my predecessor, still in too many cases demand remedy. Among these are the need for stricter classification, especially in the Fifth Standard; greater constructive ability in composition and attention to grammatical exercises; increased use of oral treatment in arithmetic; and fuller and more accurate knowledge in geography and history. It may be added that there is a wide need for oral instruction, with the accompanying training in oral composition. Excessive reliance has been placed on the use of text-books and on written answers in the ordinary course of the instruction, with the result that in the final tests even the written work of the pupils is meagre and stilted, and the pupils are defective in mental alertness and do not give sufficient attention to sequence and relation in connection with the subject-matter.

*Standard Classes.*—With reference to the various standard classes, one of the weakest sections was the preparatory division. The number of cases in which there was a suitable scheme of work and variety in the instruction was exceedingly small. A good deal of improvement was effected, however, during the part of the year subsequent to my first visit, in the course of which time was devoted to a demonstration of method. There was a notable air of discovery among many teachers when the use of bead-frames, counters, and the blackboard was exemplified, and when homely illustration and brightness were employed in the oral exercises.

While the result of defective methods in the preparatory classes showed its effect in the First Standard, it may be recorded that the lower standards, including the Fourth, completed the school year fairly successfully, and the general criticism applies least to this section of the schools. During the year improvement was evident in the grammatical exercises and in oral and written composition. The average result is still, however, not strong.

The Fifth was very generally the weakest standard in the schools. It is in this class that defects in methods and lenient classification have an immediate effect. The character of the course makes strong demands on intelligence and resource. It is important that both the previous training and current methods should receive closer attention. If, instead of being backward, the Fifth Standard is well prepared, the pupils can then reap the full advantage of what to many is the final year—that in the Sixth Standard. The suggestions given in connection with the latter class apply equally to this standard.

An estimate of the efficiency of the Sixth Standard may be arrived at partly by the number of certificates gained by the pupils. In all, 161 pupils were tested; and, of these, eighty-four, or 52 per cent., obtained proficiency certificates, and twenty-three, or 14 per cent., were awarded competency certificates. Even of those that were allotted certificates, the work in geography, history, and drawing was to a large extent defective in scope. To bring about the establishment of a higher standard of work the chief requirements are stricter classification, improved training in the lower classes, and more vigorous effort in the first half of the school year. Many of the pupils also illustrated the need for practice under examination conditions, so as to develop self-reliance and resource. In the private (Catholic) schools thirty-two pupils were examined in S6; nineteen, or 59 per cent., obtained proficiency certificates, and nine, or 28 per cent., competency certificates.

*Main Subjects.*—The general result in reading, recitation, and spelling was good. There is need for insistence on the thorough study of the necessary words before lessons are read. The particular method selected for such preparation is not so important as thoroughness. The spelling as a special exercise should follow the completion of the reading-lesson, and attention should be directed mainly to words within the vocabulary of the pupils.

In composition the essays were mostly accurate in detail; the chief defect was lack of freedom and arrangement. It was in the grammatical exercises that the greatest weakness existed. In S3 and S4 a considerable recovery was made during the year, but in S5 and S6 it was seldom found that good work was forthcoming. The demands of the syllabus are moderate in extent and practical in application, in addition to being valuable as mental training. There is every reason, therefore, to expect fuller recognition of the importance of this branch of the subject.

In arithmetic the most notable weakness was in the preparatory division and in the senior classes. The preliminary oral study of number and processes had been neglected, and verbal memory relied on too much in the acquirement of a knowledge of tables and of the principles involved in the various rules. It should be established that before a table is memorized, or examples attempted in written exercises, a thorough understanding of the elements should be achieved by oral work with practical application. The written exercises were generally displayed with neatness and fullness. There was, however, too frequently insufficient knowledge of principles.

The treatment of geography is too narrow and detached. The mathematical, physical, and industrial aspects should be correlated, and the pupils trained to give comprehensive information. They should be able to summarize their knowledge in connection with a continent or smaller area, such as a river-basin, a plain, a mountain system, a zone or its boundaries; climate; important industries; or the distribution of population. Maps, globes, sketches, and models should be studied first. Text-books may, if necessary, follow in complementary service. For purposes of instruction the use of traced maps is very effective, and this is distinct from subsequent exercises of map-drawing from memory.

The defects noted in connection with geography are evident also in the treatment of history. There should be an increased amount of detail, and this should at the same time be treated on broader lines. The development of the Empire and of the liberties and rights of the people should always form the basis of the instruction.