

*Composition.*—Good work, both oral and written, has been accomplished in the junior divisions of our schools. In the schools where we noticed that the handwriting had deteriorated in the middle classes, however, we usually found the essays of the same classes poorly done, errors in spelling being frequent, and punctuation being largely neglected. As the result of more practice, a wider range of reading, and in some instances systematic oral discussion, the written essays of S6 showed a gain in content and freedom of expression, while in some cases the value of the paragraph received recognition. It is a matter of surprise, however, that the great majority of pupils, even in our best schools, find their alpha and omega of punctuation in the full stop.

*Arithmetic.*—As a general rule arithmetic has been satisfactorily taught. In the infant classes in charge of trained teachers number-work is usually good; and in schools where such is the case the arithmetic of S1 and S2 may be placed in the same category. The standard of attainment of S3 and S4 is satisfactory. S5 did not show to advantage in the Department's tests, which were handled more successfully by S6. The inability of the former class to cope with decimals was no doubt due to the postponement of the work till too late in the year. Two main causes of inferior quality of work in arithmetic came under our notice: the imperfect teaching and memorizing of tables, and the failure to recognize that mental arithmetic should be the antecedent, not the consequent, of the written work. It was our common experience, too, that schools which made careful and methodical arrangement a feature of their work obtained the best results.

*Geography.*—The results in physical geography were satisfactory, although in the treatment of the subject we noted a tendency in some quarters to depend more upon lessons of instruction than on observational work and experiment. The treatment of mathematical geography has been somewhat restricted, but there has been a corresponding gain in the commercial aspect of the subject. The best work was done by those teachers who led their pupils to grasp the relations between the climate, the products, and the industries of a country.

*History and Civics.*—Apart from what has been done in following the progress of the present international strife, the treatment of history was generally disappointing. The subject of civics has received increased attention this year. The realistic method of teaching civics by holding mock Parliaments, Courts, &c., which has been adopted in a few schools, might with advantage be used by many more teachers.

*Drawing.*—The removal of brush drawing from the list of subjects in handwork has accounted for a reduction in the number of schools taking this subject, crayon-work filling its place. On the whole, colour-work varies from fair to good, while in a few schools it is very good. In many cases too much freedom is allowed to children in using crayons without due supervision. Freehand drawing continues to be satisfactorily taught, although drawing from copies is still too much in evidence.

*Handwork.*—Elementary handwork is taught in practically all the schools. In the preparatory and junior divisions the branches generally taught are paper-work and modelling in plasticine, while cardboard-work, woodwork, and cookery are taught in the senior division. Some difficulty was experienced by the Board in obtaining adequate supplies of plasticine and of cardboard-knives, but in other respects the supply of material was ample. It cannot be said, however, that the material has in every case been well used. Handwork does indeed receive full recognition in the school time-tables, but in the very large number of schools where the teachers have received no training in the branches taught the result is only fair. With a view to improving the teaching of plasticine-modelling and cardboard-work, model schemes in these branches were issued to untrained teachers, while a temporary rearrangement of the office-work enabled one of our number to conduct a Saturday class in cardboard-work. As in former years, the cookery and woodwork classes were taught at convenient centres by fully trained teachers. In connection with the cookery classes a scheme of training in home science prepared in this office was put into operation, and for the first time we can report that systematic instruction in this important branch has been given to the girls attending these classes.

*Nature-study and Elementary Science.*—There is no doubt that the intelligently observant child is on the increase, particularly in those districts in which the schools have caught the true spirit of nature-study. But the somewhat common treatment of this subject as formal instruction in plant-life tends to make the teachers, not the pupils, the active agents during the lessons. The schemes of work in elementary science were in most schools based on garden-work. Where indoor experiments and outside operations have joined hands the results have been good. The few schools taking elementary physics have done very satisfactory work in that subject.

*Singing.*—In the more remote parts of the district, where there are few outside opportunities for musical culture, the pupils often exhibit marked deficiency of ear. In most schools, however, songs are rendered with heartiness and a fair degree of tunefulness. The time spent in learning songs (not infrequently of doubtful musical value) could in many cases be better employed in voice-culture, and in the practice of sight reading and ear exercises.

*Physical Instruction.*—In a few schools the instruction in physical exercises is exceedingly well carried out. The good effects are manifested not only in the improved carriage of the pupils, but also in the general tone and discipline of these schools. But the number of schools in which the instruction is of little value is steadily increasing, as more teachers are being appointed who have themselves received no training in physical exercises. In most of the larger schools organized games are made an integral part of school life, but in many of the smaller schools the pupils are left to their own resources during the period of recreation.

*Morals and Health.*—The laws of health are on the whole satisfactorily taught. The specific subject of temperance, which the action of Governments has brought into prominence during the war, has not been neglected. The temperance wall-sheets supplied by the Department have generally been made