

Writing : This subject continues to show improvement, but rapidity of penmanship is still too little in evidence. Many pupils write really well, but only a few have developed a free running hand combining legibility, symmetry, and speed.

Arithmetic : The remarks on the methods employed in teaching arithmetic, and the standard attained, appearing in previous reports still apply. The subject does not show any definite advance; indeed, in many cases it fails to reach the level of former years. Improved methods of setting out written work have been adopted, but ability to grapple with problem tests, even those of a purely elementary character, and rapidity and accuracy in dealing with work generally, are still disappointing. We would again draw attention to the very great necessity for a foundation in the preparatory and lower-standard classes well and truly laid. Number work and tables in these classes, thoroughly understood and accurately learnt, are essential for future progress. In quite a number of schools the blackboard is not used with sufficient freedom, too much working from books being encouraged. The blackboard is an indispensable factor where classes are either large or numerous, and under no circumstances should its use be neglected.

History : The teaching of history is beset with many difficulties. The mind of the primary-school pupil is naturally immature, to which constitutional, political, and foreign matters present but trifling interest. Again, a considerable number of teachers do not possess the necessary academic equipment, with its accompanying wide and extensive detailed knowledge, to make a strong and helpful appeal to the child mind. And, further, the historical material in which the child is really interested, such as the customs of the people, their occupations, their amusements, the details of daily homelife, is not readily available. To talk to the young child mainly about the actions and thoughts of adults obviously is not the best way to arouse his interest, and when such discourse takes the form of giving accounts of battles and conquests the result may be positively harmful. In view of these difficulties it is not surprising to find that much of the history-teaching accomplishes little or nothing of real or lasting benefit. In many of the larger and more efficient schools suitable schemes are well dealt with, and that portion of the subject coming under the heading of "civics" is treated with commendable success, but in a large proportion of our country schools the subject is one of disappointment. Teachers in these schools too frequently rely on the historical reading-book, from which the pupil is expected to learn practically unaided. Nothing can be regarded as a substitute for vivid personal teaching, and those who make insufficient use of this form of instruction cannot hope to succeed.

Geography : In general this subject is improving in treatment, under wider and more intelligent schemes of instruction. In the large schools it is really well taught, but in many of the smaller schools it cannot be called satisfactory—frequently the result of too much map-drawing and too little actual teaching. The text-book is an undoubted aid, especially in the upper classes, but pupils must be shown how to use the text-book, and its study must be accompanied by constant supervision and frequent explanation and illustration on the part of the teacher.

Drawing and Handwork : These subjects continue to receive careful and, for the most part, successful treatment; though over a considerable portion of the district the appearance made in drawing shows but little improvement.

Agriculture : The success attending this subject depends mainly on the knowledge, equipment, and enthusiasm of the teacher. In many schools both indoor and outdoor work are well linked up, and the schemes in use supply opportunities for treating the subject with understanding and profit. In others, however, the work is largely confined to elementary gardening operations, with but little effort towards leading pupils to learn from observation and experiment, and to understand some of the simpler processes and principles of successful soil and plant treatment.

Nature-study : This subject continues to receive attention, and in some schools is taught with intelligence and understanding. In others, however, its possibilities are but feebly developed, the lessons consisting mainly of a little elementary botanical information obtained mainly from books. Until teachers recognize that nature-study is not botany or biology or geology, or any other of the natural sciences, but a means of directing the child's attention to the wonders and beauties of nature, and to the change inseparable from the constant operations of nature's laws, and, through the interest thus aroused, of developing thought- and expression-power, appreciation of more immediate surroundings, and a desire to extend his knowledge of the wonderful world in which he lives, the progress made will continue to disappoint.

General Science : In a few schools where this subject is taken in lieu of nature-study or elementary agriculture its success depends mainly on the amount of apparatus at the disposal of the teacher and class; in general, where equipment is liberal, results are encouraging. We would once more draw attention to the paramount importance of practical work, in which the pupils themselves take the leading part. This is possible only under conditions where the supply of apparatus is sufficient for the independent effort of each unit or small group of units.

The Service.—We have found it necessary in the course of our remarks to criticize with some freedom the efforts, the aims, and the methods of teachers as these appear in their schemes of instruction and in the general progress of their pupils. Our strictures, however, do not apply universally, but only to those who have been unable to satisfy the demands of reasonable tests. Before closing, we desire to express our appreciation of the high sense of duty and devotion to the cause of education shown at all times by the great majority of our teachers. The future of a country which includes such men and women in its education service presents much hopeful outlook.

We have, &c.,

E. K. MULGAN,	JAS. W. McILRAITH,	} Inspectors.
CHAS. W. GARRARD,	N. R. MCKENZIE,	
JAMES T. G. COX,	M. McLEOD,	
G. H. PLUMMER,	GEO. PITCAITHLEY,	
MAURICE PRIESTLEY,	J. W. HARDY,	

The Director of Education.