

teachers and scholars. Another weakness in these schools is the lack of a suitable scheme; more often than not pupils pass through the upper standards and complete their Sixth Standard course with little knowledge of much of the world's geography. In many schools a geographical reading-book is used, and the total knowledge acquired by the pupils is obtained therefrom. We would again point out the urgent necessity that exists for teachers to give bright, vigorous oral lessons in this subject, supplemented if necessary by the reading of a suitable book. Map-reading and map-drawing are to a large extent neglected. In connection with physical geography, which is really advanced nature-study, it may be pointed out that few teachers make a regular practice of training their pupils to take weather and similar observations, which form the foundation for the subsequent intelligent teaching of such subjects as climate, day and night, seasons, &c.

*History.*—History remains at about the same level as that of former years, and can scarcely be called satisfactory. During the past year the attention of teachers has been specially drawn to the necessity that exists for securing greater efficiency in this subject, and in quite a number of schools a reasonable effort has been made in this direction. Strange to say, the parts best known are those connected with the pre-Plantagenet, Tudor, and Stuart periods; of the Hanoverian little is generally known. There has been in general a return to the periodic method, with a retention of some of the weaker features of the concentric; there is too much repetition year after year of some periods, to the exclusion of a progressive course of lessons. One source of weakness in the teaching of this subject can be traced to the teacher's own scanty knowledge—a knowledge gleaned while at school from one text-book. If the subject is to be vitalized the instructor must read widely and be possessed of much more knowledge than he is required to impart to his pupils.

Some years ago the teaching of history consisted in the mere memorizing of tabulated facts to be recited for examination purposes. To-day there appears to be a tendency to swing too far in the other direction. Pupils are asked to trace movements and to seek causes and effects without knowing the outstanding events. Memorization to the exclusion of everything else has in many schools given place to no memorization at all, with the result that scholars have but the haziest notions of the subject. It is a debatable point whether or not the smaller schools should not be supplied with a definite scheme in this subject (the courses of work drawn up by the Board's organizing teachers contain such a scheme). Inspectors could then demand a knowledge of the ground covered, together with evidence that there has been some breadth of treatment. It is quite possible also that we are attempting too much in trying to teach this subject to the younger pupils—those in Standards III and IV. History is, after all, essentially a study for more mature minds. Certainly these younger pupils can derive pleasure and a certain amount of profit from the stories of earlier days, but they are not old enough to be burdened with an array of more or less dry facts or to appreciate cause and effect. Let them have presented to them, by word of mouth or per medium of books of historical romance, the lighter and naturally interesting stories of great persons and events (not for purposes of memorizing), but let the study of history be postponed to Standards V and VI; and the high school should have something further to teach at a time when the pupil is better able to understand it. Meantime the gradual growth of school libraries is having a good effect upon this subject, and probably the enrichment of these libraries with interesting historical stories, biographies, &c., suitable for all standards will do more than anything else to cultivate an understanding and love for the subject. Where such libraries are absent the foundations of history are inevitably narrow and uninteresting. Teachers will no doubt give the subject more attention, but we would point out that by too exclusive oral instruction they will not succeed in raising the standard in any marked degree: such work must be reinforced and impressed by much silent reading.

*Drawing and Handwork.*—Drawing shows gradual improvement, and a higher standard of artistic expression is achieved. There are still, however, a large number of schools in which the teachers cling to the old conventional outline drawing to the exclusion of mass work in light and shade and colour, while the old fault—lack of proportion—is still much in evidence. Nature drawing is often in the country schools given too much prominence, and is too seldom properly correlated with design drawing. So-called mass drawing often means merely a waste of chalk, in that the pupil first of all produces the shape of the object by means of an outline and then spreads on the chalk to represent the mass, instead of following the more educative plan of producing the shape at the same time as he represents the mass.

Handwork is capable of being considerably improved. In the larger schools in particular handwork appears to be a rather neglected subject. When attention is drawn to this teachers shelter themselves behind the excuse that supplies of material are late in coming to hand. Plasticine-modelling, which is meant to be made use of in connection with and as an aid to other lessons, is better taught than paper-work. In connection with geography plasticine is often misused to produce the outline of the representation of a country being studied, rather than to indicate its surface features. Handwork should be chiefly used as a means of illustrating other subjects; unfortunately, however, many teachers accept from their pupils illustrations of a very crude order which increase neither the pupils' accuracy nor their power of artistic expression. Crude illustrations should no more be accepted than crude writing, composition, or arithmetic. Greater attention to this matter would probably lead to greater neatness in all other work. In handwork, as in drawing, teachers appear to be quite unaware of the latent talent of their pupils.

*Agriculture.*—The efficiency of the teaching in agriculture is of a satisfactory standard. The weakness most apparent is the neglect to adapt the work to the prevailing weather conditions. Too often indoor or academic work is not taken when the weather is unfavourable for practical work outside. Long periods elapse when only one aspect—the outdoor aspect—of the work is taken. In some schools, moreover, far too much time is devoted to outdoor work; operations which one man could perform in an hour or two are often spread over weeks by twenty pupils. This is more