

statements it should contain. Not rarely a long string of disconnected and independent statements is formed into a single sentence of immoderate length, having its parts tacked together by all sorts of appropriate and inappropriate connectives. All this shows a prevailing want of method and system in teaching composition. In past years it has not been examined with any regularity, and suitable methods of dealing with it have apparently been less considered than in other branches. In my opinion the earliest exercises should be specially directed to impart a correct idea of a simple sentence, and for a time nothing more than simple sentences should be expected. The next step might well be the combining of two or more simple sentences into a compound one. This is an easier exercise, I think, than making complex sentences, and might therefore come before it. By-and-by reproduction exercises and original composition exercises might be introduced. All work of this kind requires careful superintendence, and the errors should be marked, pointed out, and, as far as possible, explained to the pupils. Attention to this is, in my judgment, all-important. It is here that mistakes appear to be most frequently made. Numerous exercises are done, but too few are efficiently corrected and criticised. It would be far better to have fewer exercises, and more thorough examination of them. For practice in framing long and somewhat complicated sentences the "English Composition Exercises" in the "Royal School Series" would be found very useful. These are so arranged that a teacher could easily mark off how many heads were to be combined into a sentence, and thus any desired degree of complexity in the exercises might be attained. In reproduction and original composition exercises I believe it would be well, at first, to require short sentences, each containing a single principal statement, and for a time to discourage the use of long and complicated ones. It appears to me desirable that a certain proportion of the regular composition exercises should be finally written out in an exercise book. Such a record would be of value as showing the method of teaching and the amount of attention to correction and amendment. The proper correction of scholars' exercises in composition and other subjects takes up a good deal of a teacher's time, and is often done in a way which I fear is not very effective. As far as possible the members of a class should correct their neighbours' exercises, and the teacher's examination of them should come after this preliminary correction. This mode of proceeding is decidedly the best for the pupils, and is also the easiest for the teacher, for he need not on every occasion overhaul all the exercises for the day—the correction of a selection will be sufficient. Some exercises, and especially more advanced composition exercises, cannot well be treated in this way; but the majority of school exercises can and should be so handled. I have in many instances had occasion to admire the patient labour bestowed outside school hours by teachers on the correction and examination of written exercises, but in few cases have they found their trouble adequately repaid, and I doubt if it is an economical application of their time.

In the teaching of geography there has been considerable improvement in some schools, but on the whole there has been little general advance during the year.

History is one of the new subjects added under "The Education Act, 1877." As yet but little progress has been made in it, and in a large number of schools it has been merely begun. Considerable difficulty was experienced in getting a supply of books, and there is at present a great variety of them in use in the district. Many of the books appear to me too elaborate, and likely to require for their preparation a far greater amount of time than can reasonably be devoted to the subject. I consider "The Shilling History of England," by the Rev. M. Creighton, a book well suited for use in the Board's schools, wherever a longer text-book is unsuitable. It is vastly superior to the "Brief History," so widely in use. In the circumstances of the Otago schools the examinations in history have necessarily been of a very simple character, and the requirements for a pass very humble.

Science and object-lessons have received more or less attention according to circumstances. In the larger schools, where the staff is less limited, and where the teacher's attention is less divided between a number of different classes, a reasonable proportion of time has been devoted to both. In the smaller schools, and especially in schools having but a single teacher, they have necessarily suffered comparative neglect. It seems to me premature to pronounce any decided opinion on the success of the attempt to teach a knowledge of common things in the public schools. The success attained so far is not very reassuring, but the trial has been too short, and made under too unfavourable circumstances, to justify disappointment. In many schools I have not been able to hold any examination in science- or in object-lessons, but had simply to rest content with looking over the scheme of lessons submitted. The branches of science most commonly taught are physiology, physics, and chemistry. For the lessons on physics apparatus has been sadly missed. Thirty sets have now arrived, and should be distributed to the largest schools without delay. In some schools there is a good deal of ignorance about the nature and aims of an object-lesson. On several occasions I have found it necessary to point out that the primary and main aim of an object-lesson is not to impart new information, but rather to take some object known or familiar to the pupils, and consider with them its nature, striking properties, production, and uses, and this in such a way as to draw out and exercise their power of observing and of reflecting on what they see or know. The way in which such a lesson is managed is manifestly a very important matter. Its arrangement should be orderly and natural, and always thought out beforehand, while its management should be suggestive and directive, rather than communicative. The selection of the matter to be introduced requires considerable judgment, and more should be known of the subject than is likely to be touched on in the lesson. New information should be cautiously introduced, and only in so far as it can really be understood. The few object-lessons I have had the opportunity of hearing were rarely exempt from what appeared to me faults in the matter introduced, or in the management of the particulars. Some of the younger teachers have juster notions on this matter than others of much greater experience.

DISCIPLINE.—The discipline continues to be, on the whole, satisfactory. I have remarked considerable improvement in the behaviour of the pupils in some schools formerly conspicuous for rough and unseemly conduct. Except in a few cases, little pains is bestowed on trying to cultivate good manners in the scholars. Throughout the year the schoolrooms have generally been better filled than formerly. The crowding has not been favourable to honesty and independence of work, and I have found more reason than usual to suspect copying.