

teacher may rest satisfied that, if he produces good results in his own way, we shall do our best to appreciate his efforts. But those who have less opportunity of learning the prevailing views may find a few hints of some value to them.

READING.—A distinct attempt has been made throughout the district to improve this subject. It is now the exception to meet with a standard class that does not deserve the term "fair;" and, if good reading is rare and good comprehension still rarer, the advance already made encourages higher expectations of the future. It is a great pity that some better arrangement is not made about the reading books. In a few schools the lower standards read two books in the year; but in the vast majority the children of Standard I. repeat over and over again seventy or eighty pages of very simple matter till they know them by heart; and to Standard II. a somewhat similar remark is applicable. To obtain good reading and to cultivate a taste for reading we must provide our children with more variety. It is not always practicable to master two books within the year; but something might be done in the direction of our wishes by introducing into these classes books containing a greater amount of matter. It is, again, an excellent plan to adopt in each country school two entirely distinct sets of books for use in each alternate year. Those who fail have thus the encouragement of beginning new work, like their late class-fellows, and greater facility is given for grouping the pupils together with advantage. The same rule might readily be extended to the little book of exercises commonly used for practice in arithmetic. If the principle were once adopted, parents could hardly fail to recognise its advantages, and would gladly incur the slight additional expense.

SPELLING AND DICTATION.—A larger proportion of continuous dictation in the test exercises has been a feature of the last two series of examinations. In most cases the necessary practice has evidently been given, but the number of failures still made occasions some surprise. Transcription requires increased care. This is a matter in which the teacher must be satisfied with nothing short of complete accuracy.

WRITING.—There is no reason why almost every child in every elementary school should not become a fairly good writer. But before this result is reached much improvement must take place in the present treatment of the subject. Many teachers appear to think they have done their duty admirably if they have supervised the work and taken care that the copies are fairly imitated. No doubt this is a great thing, and it would be well if the merit were general. But something more is wanted. A free use of the blackboard in oral class instruction, and a consistent preservation of style in a suitable gradation of size from the earliest beginnings, are necessary. It is important that the child should know both the where and the why of a fault or a merit, that the writing in the earlier stages should be just of sufficient size to make correction easy and effective, that a common tendency to the premature use of advanced books should be checked, and that the pupil should at no stage of his progress have anything to unlearn. We have no wish to force on teachers any particular style of writing. They are frequently the best judges of what they can teach best, and any style that produces good writing throughout the school can scarcely fail to secure approval. For our own part, we think the true principles of teaching are embodied, though with some remaining imperfections, in the later editions of Vere Foster's series and—with a different interpretation and a less rigid adherence to rule—in the books issued by Marcus Ward and Co. Experience proves that these principles properly carried out produce good and facile writing at an earlier stage of the child's career, and are consequently of more general service to the community.

ARITHMETIC.—Attention was drawn last year to the prevalence of unit-counting in our schools. The practice is still common, as might be expected from the well-known difficulty of eradicating it; but the teachers are more generally alive to the defect, and for the most part are making efforts in the right direction. In the higher classes objections are frequently made that the questions set at examination are not "straightforward." It is true the exercises are not always such as can be worked by the direct application of a rule or formula. It is not desirable that they always should be such as require no thought on the part of the child. If more use were made of the system of reduction to the unit in the solution of problems there would be less heard of these objections, more particularly if the children were trained to set down the successive steps in the reasoning.

GRAMMAR.—The bulk of the failures are in grammar and arithmetic. In grammar more attention has been given to composition, which has made a corresponding advance; but in other respects the subject has not improved. The use of meaningless phrases as a substitute for the expression of thought, inability to appreciate simple word functions, ignorance of inflections, confusion of such distinctions as those of transitive and intransitive, active and passive, participle and verbal noun, indicative and subjunctive, and evidence of the severance of parsing from the analysis of the sentence come under the notice of the examiner far too frequently in classes where such faults are inexcusable. Success in these matters cannot be achieved without rousing into greater activity the thinking powers of the children. As some difference of practice exists in the matter of parsing it may not be out of place to give a brief sketch of our ideas in regard to it. In the Third Standard the children are required simply to write down lists of words to be selected; but we are entitled to expect evidence that they reason the thing out for themselves—that in teaching some such method of procedure has been adopted as is contained in Abbott's "How to tell the Parts of Speech." In oral examination, where such is practicable, some explanation of the ground of choice made should be forthcoming. That the children should, unaided, explain the functions of the words suitably in writing is more than we can expect of all at this stage; but in the next higher standard they ought to have gained a sufficient command over language and a sufficiently clear insight to enable them to do this with ease and certainty. The more definite the statement of the use the more credit is due, and the power should as far as possible be made to extend to the classes into which the parts of speech are divided. Thus, in the phrase "three little rabbits," it is better to say—"Three," an adjective of quantity [number]; it is joined to the noun 'rabbits,' and shows how many rabbits we mean: 'little,' a descriptive adjective; it is joined to the word 'rabbits,' and describes the rabbits: 'rabbits,' a common noun; it is the name of something, and belongs in common to several things of