

room for great improvement. The value of this exercise can hardly be overestimated, and in the face of all that has been done in the past to impress this upon the teachers it is astonishing how little effect it has had on most of them. Over and over again, on my visits of inspection, I have seen a reading lesson taken, and the only approach at dealing with this part of the work was the asking of the meanings of a few big words as they are given in the list at the end of each lesson. A variation of this plan was to give a word out of the list for oral spelling, and out in one breath would come the spelling of this big word, with its bigger meaning thrown into the bargain.

**SPELLING.**—The spelling of the First and Second Standards was generally good, and sometimes it was excellent. Hitherto I have strictly confined myself to giving words from the reading books used during the year, but I should just like to remind the teachers of those standards that I am not bound to limit my choice of words in this way—and the warning may be of some service to those who persist in presenting their pupils for examination in the First Standard in no higher a reading book than the old "First Royal Reader." From the Third Standard upwards the attainments of the children in different schools varied in this more than in any other subject.

**WRITING.**—To any one accustomed to see children at desk work a visit to many of our schools would yield a surprise. The children in the upper classes would be found for the most part sitting with the right side to the desk, the writing on slate or paper being done at right angles to the direction of the desk instead of parallel with it. The explanation is that this is the only attitude a boy or girl of average growth can remain in with ease. The desks are very narrow, and the shelves underneath take up so much space that there is no room left for one's knees. The forms, too, that have been made to go along with these desks are so very narrow that I am sure the children would often be glad to stand up to rest. Fortunately desks and forms of this pattern have not been supplied to all the schools. In some of the oldest schools the desks take up too much room and are ugly to look at, but they are comfortable; and during the past two years desks of an improved pattern have been introduced. The matter is so important that I would recommend the Board to have all the obnoxious desks altered. The cost would be considerable, but the money would be well spent. Even where there is no hindrance to the children assuming and keeping a good position at desk work I do not find a good position always taken; and I have very frequently to find fault with the way in which the pen is held. These are points which, in the teaching of writing, cannot be too carefully attended to. In the small schools where one teacher has to attend to all the standards good slate writing in the First and Second Standards is not general; but in the larger schools it is usually very good. Some of the schools deserve praise for the writing of the upper classes, but from too many this praise must be withheld. In many cases it would seem as if the teacher had yielded his place to the engraved headlines.

**ARITHMETIC.**—The improvement in arithmetic which we are anxiously looking for from year to year is slow to come. The results are a little better in Standards I. and II., and in the other standards no ground has been lost. I do not feel myself called upon to say much here as to the best means to be employed by the teachers in their treatment of this subject—it would merely be a repetition of what they will find for themselves in the Inspectors' reports for years past. The whole matter resolves itself into this: Train the children to be accurate and expert in the simple rules, cultivate their intelligence, and—well, let the teacher now and then read the lesson, "With Brains, Sir."

**GRAMMAR.**—In Standard III. the grammar was well done in the majority of the schools, but the same cannot be said of the results in any of the other classes. Though still far from satisfactory, it has improved to some extent in Standard IV.; and, while the parsing in Standards V. and VI. is seldom better than more or less skilful guessing, good analysis of sentences has become more general. To judge from the exercises in composition that I have to examine in school after school, one is forced into the belief that it is the most neglected of all the subjects taught in our schools. It is true that in the course of the examinations I come upon a good many exercises that are neatly written and that show correct spelling and punctuation, but they are few compared with the number of those that are made almost worthless from bad spelling, neglect of pointing, and want of neatness and care in the handwriting. I am always prepared to let a good composition exercise count for a pass in the case of any child whose grammar paper is in other particulars of a very indifferent character; but such a combination is very rare. As a rule, I find that where the composition is good, grammar has been well taught.

**GEOGRAPHY.**—The geography of the Second Standard is now very satisfactorily treated in nearly all the schools. Failure in this subject in the Third Standard is, with a few exceptions, confined to those pupils who are very irregular in attendance. Geography is a class subject in Standard IV., but I cannot say that I have found less attention paid to it than in the standards in which it is a pass subject: indeed, except Standard II., no class has shown to better advantage. In Standards V. and VI. there is generally a very fair knowledge of the positions of places of importance, and the children are frequently word-perfect in telling what their books say about their industries, &c.; but when an attempt is made to get the children to account for the localisation of certain industries, silence usually settles down on the class. In a few of the schools map drawing is very well done, but there are still many schools where it does not seem to receive the attention which it deserves. Some of the teachers are acquiring greater facility in the drawing of outline maps on the blackboard during the geography lessons. This can always be relied on as the surest way of impressing the facts on the minds of the scholars, and the good teacher of geography will not depart from this method, however excellent his wall maps may be.

**HISTORY.**—In forming a judgment on the character of the work done in history during the year I have relied almost wholly on the appearance made by the classes during the oral examinations, partly conducted by myself and partly by the teacher. The most noticeable feature was the readiness with which, in many schools, the children would recite bits from their text books which would have formed the answers to the stock questions of the ordinary written examinations.