

pleased to be able to report gratifying improvement in the methods adopted for imparting the art. Where improvement has taken place it has been most marked in the work of Standards III. and IV. From the most systematic teaching which the subject now receives in these standards higher proficiency throughout all classes may reasonably be expected. The essays of Standards V. and VI. are usually quite destitute of punctuation marks, and are often replete with gross errors in grammatical idiom and in spelling. I have occasionally prescribed for Standard VI. a few lines of poetry for paraphrasing. The indifferent success achieved by the scholars in this exercise shows it to be a novel one to them.

ARITHMETIC.—In Standards I. and II. the instruction in this subject may be regarded as satisfactory, the children doing what is required of them with accuracy and rapidity. Where failure occurs it is usually due to an inadequate knowledge of the addition and multiplication tables. Considerable attention is evidently paid in these classes to the teaching of numeration and notation. In the higher classes there is evidence of progress. In many schools these classes show increased ability to grapple with problems that call for an exercise of the reasoning powers; but in Standards III. and IV. the failures are still too numerous. In a large proportion of the schools examined the pupils of these standards perform the mechanical operations with very fair accuracy, but fail to attempt the simple problems set, or work them in such a way as to compel the conclusion that the teaching has been very unintelligent. They seem unable to grasp the meaning of the very simple language in which the problems are expressed, and exhibit a scanty knowledge of the principles of arithmetic and of their practical application. Mental arithmetic is at a very low ebb. Its value as a mental cultivator does not appear to be fully appreciated or understood.

OBJECT LESSONS.—These are given in nearly every school, and with considerable effect in some; but in the majority of cases they do not receive the amount of attention that they merit, the number of lessons given during the year being often ridiculously small. The main purpose of these lessons does not always appear to be understood. In most of those that have been given before me there has been too much lecturing and too little educative questioning; too much decanting of facts into the minds of the children, and too little effort to develop their observing and reasoning faculties. It cannot be too strongly impressed on the teacher that the value of these lessons will be proportionate to the degree in which they are made real mental processes of teaching, and engage the actual intelligent exercise of the senses on the object. The notes of lessons which I require on examination day very frequently deal with subjects that are quite beyond the mental ken of the children, and are often an exact transcript of those given in some text book. Many of these text books doubtless supply excellent models, but the notes of lessons contained in them must be recast in the mould of the teacher's own mind if the lesson is to be presented to the children in a form sufficiently interesting to command their attention. Where the text book is slavishly followed there usually results only a mechanical monotony of lesson-giving, spiritless in itself and deadening in its dull uniformity to the faculties of the children.

HISTORY.—In the upper standards fair knowledge of this subject is occasionally displayed, though the answers of the children not unfrequently show indications of "rote" work.

GEOGRAPHY.—So far as it is a pass subject, geography is taught with very fair success. Some teachers, however, seem to take too narrow a view of the subject, and direct attention almost solely to mere topographical detail, to the comparative neglect of such topics as the resources, physical features, peoples, &c., of the various countries. I would recommend more frequent practice in map drawing both on the part of teachers and of pupils. The work prescribed in physical and mathematical geography is on the whole fairly well known. With the geography lessons of Standard II., as they are given in many of our schools, I cannot express satisfaction. Definitions are committed to memory, but the children too often have only the most vague conception of the thing defined, and frequently do not know the import of the words that they repeat so glibly.

SINGING.—Singing receives more or less attention in a considerable number of schools. In most it consists in giving in very fair time and tune a number of school songs. In some of the larger schools good part singing is met with. But the theory of music is taught only in a very few. It is to be regretted that the subject is not more widely taught, for when well handled it exercises an influence on the pupils which the teacher would do well to have at his command.

SCHOOL FURNITURE, ETC.—The schools in this district are generally well supplied with maps, blackboards, &c.; but these articles, I regret to say, are not always so well taken care of as they should be. In some schools the desks are unnecessarily inked, scratched, and otherwise damaged; in others both children and teachers take an active interest in the preservation and tidy appearance of the school furniture.

DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOUR.—In most of the schools visited by me the discipline is satisfactory. Class movements are executed with fair precision and celerity, and generally without undue noise. The children are for the most part self-reliant during the examination, prompt in their obedience to orders, and respectful in their bearing towards their teachers. I append the usual tables.

The Secretary, Education Board, Invercargill.

I have, &c.,

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