

proper position of the scholar while writing is almost universally neglected. Children who are carefully drilled out of doors as to the right carriage of the body still sprawl in the awkwardest postures while going through a writing lesson under the eye of their unobservant teacher, the pen being held in every way but the right one. And yet the majority of our teachers have passed examinations in "school management"! None of these matters will be overlooked at next year's examination.

With regard to the other subjects included in our school course, it may be affirmed that, generally speaking, this year's arithmetic was not by any means so satisfactory as that of the previous year, the failures in the Fourth and Fifth Standards being nearly twice as numerous as they were in 1887. I cannot pretend to account for this falling off. There was certainly no increase in the difficulty of the papers set.

Grammar, also, seems to have got less than its due share of attention, if any reliance can be placed upon the formidable array of bad marks in this subject. There appears, indeed, to be some misapprehension as to the necessity for teaching formal grammar. It may be an open question whether it is worth while to bestow much pains upon instilling into children who have so many other things to learn, and so short a time to learn them in, the exact difference between a noun clause and an adverbial clause. The time thus taken up may, conceivably, be better spent in modelling little figures in clay, or in "developing the pupils' sense of form and beauty" by fashioning (on purely scientific principles) wooden joint stools—a process much recommended, and dignified by the title of "slöjd." But it is by no means an open question whether the pass subjects specially laid down in the department's syllabus shall or shall not be taught. Whatever the law enjoins must, until the law is repealed, be carried out. On the other hand, the essays and letters of the more advanced scholars are more simply written, and show fewer traces of what may be styled pedagogic English.

In geography, as no attempt is made to exact from the children the names of obscure places, my examination not going beyond the broader outlines of the subject, the modicum demanded is usually fairly well supplied; this subject, formerly far too prominent, being now reduced to its comparative unimportance.

History is treated in much the same fashion. The small fraction of the school day that can be spared for this matter is mainly devoted to the more salient and picturesque points, such as are likely to strike a child's imagination, and are therefore not so liable to be utterly forgotten as "the provisions of the Constitutions of Clarendon," or "the articles of the Treaty of Utrecht." All my examinations in history, and many of those in geography, are now taken orally.

What is somewhat ambitiously termed "science" gets its fair share of attention. The same may be said of drawing.

Singing by note is now more generally and more systematically taught than it was, especially in the town of Nelson, the results being most satisfactory.

Needlework is generally very carefully taught.

Recitation of poetry (in listening to which I have this year devoted more time than could well be spared from more important work) is very unequally taught, the performances ranging between excellent and execrable. With regard to the quality of much of the stuff committed to memory, I will simply say that it is pitiable that such pure doggerel as "The Two Crossing Sweepers" and "Little Jim" should still find a place in "Nelson's Readers," and that it is still more pitiable that so many of our teachers should have no better taste than deliberately to choose such sorry rhymes for recitation.

What may seem to an outsider a very trivial matter has for some time seriously cramped the work of many of our schools—the want of a sufficient (in some instances of any) supply of foolscap for the use of the older scholars. Without some practice in paper work, independently of writing in copy books, scholars cannot possibly acquire that neatness and orderly arrangement of their work which will prove of such service to them in after life. Much of the slovenly paper work that I see on examination day is due solely to this deficiency. The modicum of writing paper to be supplied to each scholar ought no longer to be left to the discretion of the School Committees, who can hardly be supposed to be fully acquainted with so purely technical a matter. The minimum really needed having been fixed by the Board, no school should be left unsupplied with what is really one of "the tools of the trade."

The discipline of our schools, with scarcely an exception, still deserves warm commendation, while little fault can reasonably be found with the manners of the children, either when in school or (so far as my own observation has extended) when they are out of doors.

There is one evil practice on the part of our teachers so general and of such long standing that a reference to it ought no longer to be withheld. On meeting a newly-appointed teacher for the first time I am greeted, almost as a matter of course, with the stereotyped formula, "I found the scholars very badly grounded, and generally backward," and this, no matter how capable or successful the speaker's predecessor may have been. The want of *esprit de corps*, of generosity, nay, in some cases even of truthfulness, shown by such disparaging statements need hardly be insisted on. It is indeed fortunate for themselves that our teachers are not judged by their fellows, but by an independent examiner who has no sinister interest in depreciating their work. Otherwise it might be shown out of the mouths of the teachers themselves that almost every one who has left a school was incompetent, and that it is highly probable that the selfsame verdict will be passed by his successor upon every one who is still in office. Closely allied to this, though more venial, is the habit of extenuating the breakdown of a school at examination by the most frivolous and irrelevant excuses. A few of these, culled from last year's abundant experiences, will serve to illustrate my meaning. The following are among the pleas gravely put in: "That only eleven months and a half had intervened between the two examinations;" "that only four days' notice of an intended examination had been given, rendering the children nervous;" "that a particular class had not been examined on the precise day expected, but was taken two days later, whereby the scholars were