Under the head of science the finished public-school pupil has gained a large amount of useful knowledge, but of training to observe and experiment, and to reason on the data so obtained, he will rarely get much. This is in no way the fault of the course of instruction contemplated, but is mainly due to the want of sufficient knowledge and of enthusiasm on the part of the teachers, few of whom take up the subject seriously. Want of appliances for the proper study of scientific subjects, and the want of suitable text-books to be placed in the hands of the pupils, also count for a good deal. It seems to us unreasonable to expect children of fourteen to make substantial advances in any single branch of scientific knowledge; the time available for teaching it is too short for that. But something of value should be done in rousing intelligent curiosity, and awakening a lasting interest in scientific inquiry and its results. That these ends are not achieved in a higher degree is on the whole far from surprising, and it will most likely take years of progress, under more favourable circumstances than now exist, before they can be fully attained.

The older girls are generally very proficient in manual needlework, but very few learn, and many are never taught, to cut out and fix simple articles of apparel. Extreme ornamentation of underclothing is carried to a point that is absurd, and simplicity of taste in this domain threatens to disappear. These extravagances should be pruned, and the art of the homely dressmaker be more sedulously fostered.

A review of this summary of the attainments of pupils who have gone through the entire course of public-school education, while it discloses much that is highly satisfactory, reveals some defects which all lovers of education would gladly see remedied. The most obvious of these—the incomplete mastery of reading; the backwardness in composition which is one of its effects; the comparative ignorance about the chief political, social, and industrial arrangements of our own time; and the defective training in the art of observing and of describing and reasoning about what is seen—these defects to a large extent admit of remedy; and we know of no serious obstacle to the immediate application of remedial measures. The course of instruction would, indeed, have to be amended and in part curtailed; but this, instead of being an evil, would allow of a better educative training being given in all the higher standards.

Before leaving this topic we must again point out that our aim in dealing with it has not been to estimate the efficiency of the teaching in the two highest standards, which, except where the contrary is explicitly stated, has been throughout assumed to be good, but to summarise to the best of our knowledge the results of the working of the public system of elementary education in its entirety.

We have, so far, referred only to the intellectual and manual equipment of pupils who leave school after passing Standard IV., or at the end of the complete course. The moral training in habits of neatness order and attention, in industry and application, in truthfulness and honest work, and in mutual forbearance and good behaviour is on the whole as good as can be expected. In all these directions the schools, beyond question, exercise a great and steady influence. It is true that orchards are robbed, and rough boys sometimes behave badly in the streets, but, as a rule, the influence of the schools bears directly against all such practices, and that is all that can be reasonably expected of them.

There is no great occasion to refer in detail to the teaching of the various subjects during the past year. The visits of inspection supply much material for reflection and criticism, but it is best dealt with in colloquy or correspondence with the teachers. We shall, therefore, content ourselves with one or two remarks.

The excellent plan for establishing school libraries that has lately been recommended to headmasters by the Minister of Education (at the suggestion of a Canterbury teacher) deserves, and we hope will receive, a fair trial. In two or three schools it has been found to work very well, and, if judiciously carried out, it should do much to encourage a love of reading. To do this should be a distinct aim with all who are intrusted with the training of the more advanced pupils, and a workable scheme like this should be accorded a hearty welcome. So far as we know, the only Otago school in which the habit of reading has been encouraged for many years past is the High Street School. The headmaster there (Mr. Park) has always taken a warm interest in the excellent school library which he has created, aud hundreds of children, he informs us, have through his exertions acquired a taste for reading and study. Probably the difficulty of providing books has prevented others from following so good an example, and the chief merit of the scheme recommended by the Minister lies in its getting over this difficulty. No doubt the chief reason why the elder children read so little is the preposterous amount of unnecessary home lessons that is still, in spite of continued remonstrance, prescribed in so many schools. This is, we think, largely a result of thoughtlessness on the part of the teachers, who, as their frequent public discussions abundantly testify, are becoming more and more prone to regard the passing of standards and the gaining of marks as the be-all and end-all of the school system, rather than the adequate training of the young for the duties, the responsibilities, and the rational enjoyment of life.

During the year we have paid a good deal of attention to the intelligence of the geographical teaching in the higher standards, and where time could be had examined the work orally as well as in writing. We purpose to continue this practice as opportunity offers, for oral examination is very necessary to prevent the teaching from running in the somewhat narrow and mechanical groove which examination on paper encourages.

The answers given to such a question as this—Point out the four most important seaports on the German Ocean—clearly show that the geography of each country is taught by itself, while comparison of one country with another is almost wholly overlooked. In answering this question the great seaport of London was nearly always ignored, and small places like Ostend and Yarmouth were very commonly included in the list selected. We cite this as a readily-understood illustration of the narrowness of the teaching, and of the absence of a large and comparative treatment of the subject. Even such an important and elementary matter as the significance of the lines of latitude and longitude is often overlooked, and every second pupil is puzzled to make out from the map