

stating it orally. The interpretation of the language of the examples, even when most concise and clear, involves difficulty for many pupils. When they are working sets of examples at desks, one often discovers that they cannot readily tell what they want to find in a particular sum, neither can they readily state the data from which the number or quantity to be found is to be worked out. In such cases nothing can be more helpful than abundant practice in briefly describing the main steps in the solution. Teachers must see to this if their handling of the subject is to become really efficient. The care and neatness in setting out the solutions of examples at examination are now much more satisfactory, but equal care should be bestowed on the setting-out of the pupils' daily work, which is by no means always done. In Standard II. I purpose in future to give more prominence to mechanical examples and to give fewer problems, as there is some danger of our concentrating attention too much on the latter.

Mental arithmetic, while good in a considerable number of schools, is hardly, on the average, satisfactory. Oddly enough, whole classes, now and then, do better in this than in the ordinary arithmetic on slates.

Throughout the year composition has been examined under the scheme explained in a circular issued last year. In Standards V. and VI. the essay subjects set had not been written about before, so that the pupils' work was original. The subjects were chosen by the teachers from a very full list, and each pupil had a choice of two subjects. The percentage of passes was 77, or one less than that for last year. The application of a somewhat stricter standard of attainment in the Standard III. class led to a higher proportion of failures in that class.

Composition is a subject in which it is most difficult to draw a line between exercises that are barely entitled to pass and those that should fail; and no doubt more weak passes are recorded in it than in any other of the pass-subjects. On the other hand, particularly in the larger schools, a large percentage of the exercises—not far short of the half, I should say—were of a character ranging from creditable to quite satisfactory. Considering the difficulty of the subject, the limited knowledge and vocabulary of the pupils, their poverty of ideas, and the small range of their school-reading, the teaching is in the majority of schools fairly creditable. There are, however, many defects in the handling of the course of lessons that we can and should get rid of. One of these is the very elementary work that satisfies so many teachers in the exercises of Standard III. Here longer sentences should be required, and greater variety in the way they are stated should be encouraged. There are not a few schools in which sentences containing a single statement, and opening one after the other with the same grammatical subject, are regarded by the teachers as all that should be expected at this stage. Such exercises cannot be considered satisfactory, and the habitual occurrence of work greatly superior to this in something like half the schools in the district is sufficient to show that, with honest teaching and skilful treatment, a much higher type of work can be produced. Both here and in Standard IV. oral exercises might with advantage be more generally used. Such exercises should develop a considerable degree of smartness and alertness in thought and freedom of expression—qualities that stand in great need of stimulation. In the smaller schools, too, the Standard III. pupils might frequently be taken along with those of Standard IV. for more advanced instruction in this subject.

To some extent the training given to the pupils of the Fourth Standard class has suffered from the undue copiousness and the ready sequence of the heads composing the outline which the teachers put on the blackboard for their pupils' guidance. These in many cases leave the pupils little more to do than to supply connecting words and fill in obvious missing elements of the sentences. Used in this fashion, the outline method cannot yield a satisfactory training in composition. If it is wisely used the heads must contain only the barest suggestions, and the pupils must themselves undertake the work of selecting the points to be combined into single sentences, and make the combination from their own resources. Only matter or topics should be suggested; the selection, arrangement, and literary presentation of it should be the pupil's task, and his only. In rare cases the method has been completely misunderstood, and pupils have been practised in composing a single sentence, and usually a simple one, about each head, thus avoiding even the endeavour to select kindred ideas and knit them into connected statements in the form of a sentence of complex and compound sentences varied by occasional simple ones. Such teachers aim at a type of exercise intrinsically lower than is frequently done in the Standard III. class. It is, moreover, a great mistake to confine the instruction of the Standard IV. class to exercises on the outline method; the pupils need considerable practice in the writing of letters, in which they contribute the whole of the matter as well as its arrangement and expression. They might also with advantage share many of the reproduction exercises given in Standard V.

From Standard IV. upwards there has of late been considerable improvement in grammatical accuracy, and in the division of sentences. In the two higher standards, poverty of ideas, a very childish treatment of such ideas as there were, and the intrusion of irrelevant matter were the principal and most prevalent faults. A main cause of these defects is, I think, correctly indicated by Mr. Grierson. He thinks they may be traced to the narrow range of subjects which teachers select for their pupils to write about, to the limitation of these to the simplest to be found, and to the repetition, year after year, of much the same subjects in successive standards. Certainly the common training largely fails to cultivate the pupils' powers of thought and observation. This is most clearly seen in their attempts to deal with such subjects as the following (selected from the lists submitted for teachers to choose from): "Two Favourite Flowers," "Two Useful Metals," "Two Domestic Animals," "Two Common Birds," when the plain and commonplace points are very generally passed over, while remote, out-of-the-way, and far-fetched considerations are much in evidence. To remedy faults of this kind the pupils must be led to see and to think. The commonplace is there, and is as worthy of notice and observation as the out-of-the-way.

Composition cannot be efficiently taught in the higher classes without more thought and care than is commonly given to it, and without better examination and correction of exercises done in