

oral narrative and exposition, which is almost a necessary consequence of the arrangements laid down in the syllabus, may be suitable enough for junior classes unable to read and understand an easy text-book, but it is little suited for the instruction of more advanced pupils who experience no such difficulty. On the oral system of instruction revisal and repetition of lessons cannot be efficiently carried out, and for reasonably thorough knowledge much revisal and repetition is indispensable. In schools in which the "Southern Cross Histories" have been used as text-books in Standards IV., V., and VI. the knowledge of this subject was, in general, much more satisfactory. The instruction of Standard III. has been distinctly better than that of the higher classes.

It is only in a minority of the schools that lessons in social economy have been given, though these should form part of the teaching of every Standard VI. class. This is excused on the ground of want of time—in many cases a very good plea. Many have, no doubt, avoided it because they did not very well know how to treat it. For the future the outline of social economy contained in the "Southern Cross History," No. 2, Part II. (or No. 3), will be expected to be taught in every Standard VI. class.

The treatment of science and object-lessons is of much the same character as in recent years. Where teachers take an interest in science, and have the means of teaching it experimentally, sound and instructive work is very generally done. This is true of a good many of the smaller schools, as well as of numbers of the larger ones. The general science course is again being taken up in a good many schools where agricultural science was formerly preferred. This is a change to be welcomed, for the educative value of the two courses, and the facilities they offer for experimental illustration, are very unequal.

During the year a few schools have added to their equipment for performing illustrative experiments. These improvements are almost entirely due to the exertions of head-teachers, who organize entertainments to raise funds for this purpose. Committees approve of these exertions, but make little or no effort by economizing the school fund or by giving contributions to swell the sum that can be devoted to this excellent object. Object-lessons are still too much tainted by the false aim of giving instruction. Lists of the objects, illustrations, drawings, &c., shown in connection with each lesson should always appear at the head of the notes, but they are not rarely wanting. Both in science and in object-lessons the answers given to questions are frequently too short and incomplete, and contributed by too small a portion of the class.

In additional subjects most progress has been made of late in comprehension, though much remains to be accomplished even here. The Inspectors have bestowed a great deal of pains and of time in endeavouring to encourage more and better attention to it, especially in Standards IV., V., and VI. Recitation, though rarely unsatisfactory, should be more uniformly good. It suffers in some schools, at any rate, from neglect to teach the tasteful reading of the poems before pupils are set to learn them by heart. Such a practice is stupid to the last degree. In many cases simultaneous recitation is better than individual, and for this reason should never be used alone, and always sparingly, as a test of the teaching.

Considering the time available for their practice, singing and sewing are, in general, as well taught as we can expect. Only a few pupils learn to sing even simple melodies at sight; the great majority follow the lead of a few proficient. Drill in singing in sections, or with a number of the better singers mute, is the only cure for this; but too little time is available for instruction in it. Too many of our female teachers are unable to teach singing.

The instruction of the primer classes has in recent years improved much more than any other department of the work of the public schools. The teachers, whose intelligence, fidelity, and persevering diligence have effected this great change, deserve the greatest credit. They have the further distinction of having honestly tried new methods suggested to them, and of having applied them with zeal and good judgment whenever they found them of service. The great improvement that has been made in the teaching of reading and arithmetic in the primers is not, however, as well maintained in Standards I. and II. of the larger schools as it should be. Head-teachers need to see to this. In a number of the smallest schools the work of the primer classes is still unsatisfactory, and their teachers do not devote to these classes the time and pains they merit and would richly repay. In such cases monitors might be more used in revising reading, hearing and drilling in tables, and similar mechanical exercises.

There is still great room for improvement in the statement of oral answers. The care and completeness with which these are given is the best index of the educative training that is being given in a school. Many teachers habitually insist on answers being stated as complete sentences, but questions are constantly cropping up that cannot be adequately answered in one sentence, and pupils still show little facility and poor training in dealing with these. This defect is as evident in the answers given to questioning by teachers as in those given in reply to Inspectors' questions. Its great prevalence is little to the credit of our teachers, and it is an additional indication of faulty discipline, for it is often evident that pupils do not really try to give the best answers of which they are capable.

Nothing has been done during the year to lessen the too heavy burden imposed on teachers by the official syllabus. Nothing would do more to promote sound education than a substantial reduction of the wide course of study prescribed for the higher classes. Very many of the defects I have commented on in this report are the direct outcome of overpressure; and we can hardly hope for more educative and more thorough work until the pressure is relieved. With history treated only as a subject for reading, and the extravagances of the syllabus in geography, higher arithmetic, and agricultural science rigidly pruned, there would be time to do honest educational work all round, and little excuse but incapacity for not doing it.

In special subjects—more particularly in science, domestic economy, drawing, singing, and drill—it is high time we had special certificates testifying to a thorough practical and theoretical acquaintance with them. It is notorious that teachers who cannot sing a note, or perform and