

them to obtain a thorough comprehension of the matter to be committed to memory. The wrong conception of a single word may mar the effect of a whole passage and give the learner a sense of disgust rather than the desired literary taste. Mechanical drill in the meanings of words, too, may become irksome and just as nauseating. Happy is the man who can choose the golden mean and make the research interesting, instructive, stimulating, and ennobling. We wish to remind teachers, that in general instructions in regard to reading, they are recommended to give special attention to a few selected lessons, among which the pieces for recitation must be included.

ARITHMETIC.—Our hopes of an immediate improvement as the result of the lightening of the syllabus for arithmetic have so far not been realised. Judging by results the proportion, 53 per cent., of the scholars that were able to do the tests supplied by the Department is no higher than last year's, and we were very generally disappointed with the work of Standard V., where scarcely a third of those that attempted it were equal to the task. In the different classes the actual percentages were: Standard VI., 44; Standard V., 32; Standard IV., 61; Standard III., 74. The failure of Standard V. was general, only three schools attaining the distinction of a "good" mark for the class.

In Standard VI. a little improvement was shown, but the general result was below satisfactory, the failure of the children to obtain 30 per cent. of the required marks being by far the most common reason for withholding the proficiency certificate. The children in our very small schools of grades 0 and 1 are so deficient in the higher-standard arithmetic that one is forced to doubt whether many of our sole teachers have themselves a thorough grasp of the subject. Very few of our teachers (in spite of much explanation) had clear notions of the course of work now prescribed for the Preparatory and Standard I. classes, so that when tested by us Standard I. made a poorer exhibition than any other class except Standard V. Methods were often faulty and even though the oral work was attempted, the majority had neglected the written. The thorough understanding of one number that would readily enable the child to comprehend the next higher one was seldom aimed at. The writing of the signs + and - should be practised as soon as the child begins to count, the aim being in the first year to master the oral and written processes of the addition and subtraction of any number up to 10. In the second year the signs of multiplication and division, which have so far been withheld merely to prevent confusion in the beginner's mind, should be introduced and the four processes with each number in rotation from 1 to 20 be mastered, the early steps especially in the first year being always made with the aid of concrete illustrations. A marked feature of the system is that each unit is thoroughly and exhaustively treated before the child is even introduced to the next. We mention these details to suit the mental attitude of many teachers, for we were in this as in other subjects of the new syllabus often struck by the utter lack of originality displayed by some. Where a free and unfettered course lay before them, in which almost any movement would indicate progress, they shirked the responsibility of action and preferred to be guided by the experience of others. It is doubtful whether too extensive a range of work is not laid down for Standard I., especially as Standard II. found our tests comparatively easy. But it is certain that if the work is thoroughly grasped the children will be well equipped for all the mechanical work of the higher classes. In spite of the deficiencies mentioned teachers were promoting their lowest form as freely as ever with a laxity that in the case of arithmetic is now, since the dual classification of English and arithmetic has been introduced, less excusable than ever. It is probably owing to this laxity in former years that so much difficulty is now experienced with the higher arithmetic.

Reference to the cards issued by the Department may not be out of place. In the Standard VII. tests that were supplied for the first time and were generally used, a question involving an elementary notion of book-keeping presented difficulties to most. Although the cards were intended to fit either syllabus, several of the sums set for Standards IV. and V. were unsuitable, as they required a knowledge of troy weight, and compound practice was repeatedly set for Standard IV., while questions on the papering of walls, &c., seem to us too difficult to be classed as examples of mensuration purely, and might well be reserved for Standard VI.

As the school may now be classified separately for arithmetic the tendency to force any backward children should disappear and leave the teacher free to use the methods and courses of work best adapted to the child's mental growth. Given rational treatment we certainly expect improvement. In estimating the general efficiency of a school we have allowed each subject the same weight; in future we intend to attach greater importance to our estimate of the treatment of this subject, both on account of its importance as a study and as a basis of classification.

In passing, we notice that last year's reports show a very general chorus of complaints from the different districts of the colony, though few of the Inspectors' reports state what proportion of the scholars or schools are successful with the tests supplied. The subject has for many years presented the greatest difficulty, and we can only hope that more blackboard teaching, combined with oral explanation of the different processes by the pupils, a separate classification for this subject, and a sounder training of the junior classes, both in their oral and written exercises, will so far overcome it that the subject may no longer be a bugbear. No subject, we maintain, affords better evidence of good teaching as, for success, marked ability, thorough discipline, and conscientious, regular, and well-sustained effort are essential.

DRAWING.—Although the work done in this subject was on the whole satisfactory, very few schools have been able to overtake the full demands of the new syllabus. Meagre attempts were made at elementary design, though one or two schools showed a full appreciation of what was necessary under this head, and presented good and original work. The object-drawing was generally undertaken. Great care, however, is needed, especially in the lower classes, to see that the objects selected are not utterly beyond the ability of the children. The memory drawing required might run on parallel lines to this branch.

SINGING.—Singing now comes in as one of the compulsory subjects, and we note that whereas last year there were sixty-five schools in which singing was not taught, this year we record but twenty-