

for the activity of childhood. By the use of counters bright children soon master every aspect of the analysis; for the duller ones table drill, even in addition, is often indispensable. Mr. Garrard enters a protest against the excessive and too long-continued use of the pseudo-concrete form of questioning in the simple rules—so many cows, nuts, apples, &c., being mentioned when no concrete objects of any kind are before the scholars. Exercises dealing with easy abstract numbers should not be too long deferred. Teachers need to make it a rule in their upper classes not to give more than half-marks for sums unless all needful explanations of the working are clearly set out.

There is considerable diversity of opinion among the Inspectors as to the success of the teaching of composition. Mr. Purdie regards it as "on the whole good," and remarks that insisting on full or (to use his own term) "voluminous" exercises, has greatly aided improvement, as I also am sure it has. Mr. Crowe considers that "the subject is steadily improving," though in Standards IV and V there is a noticeable tendency to brevity. Mr. Stewart says, "This important subject is not generally well taught. Very few teachers draw up a satisfactory scheme graduated from class to class." Mr. Garrard has written at some length on this topic as follows: "Composition is carefully, but in some ways unsatisfactorily, treated. I find that it varies from 'fair' to 'good' up to Standard III, but beyond that the progress is by no means what it should be; that is to say, children in the upper standards will write a correct composition, but that is all one can say of it; there is no pretence at style." In the Classes P to Standard III teachers are making good use of oral composition, though more time could with beneficial results be devoted to the P classes in this subject. The natural result of this oral work is, as indicated above, 'accurate' composition, but our teachers should endeavour to produce something more than mere accuracy. The chief means of obtaining good composition—that is, composition involving logically connected sentences, sequence of thought, and conciseness of expression—is by encouraging children to read, and this can best be done by adopting a wider course of reading, especially in the upper standards of our schools. In this connection teachers will welcome the issue by the Department of a 'School Journal.' But the teacher can on his own part do something. Let there be more oral composition in Classes P, Standard I, and Standard II; written composition from Primer 3 upwards; no slate-work above Standard II; co-ordination of grammatical and written composition in Standard III to Standard VI; careful and accurate marking of exercises, noting particularly any praiseworthy attempts; silent reading in Standard IV to Standard VI; the proper treatment of recitation; the establishment of school libraries; more difficult subjects for composition in Standard V and Standard VI; and finally a systematic course of subjects for composition in the standard classes. The grammatical part of composition is in most of the smaller and in some of the larger schools poorly done. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the teachers have not sufficient time to devote to the subject. It is doubtful, indeed, if this part of composition is of such importance as to warrant the setting of such difficult questions as appear on the Standard V and Standard VI test-cards." On the last topic mentioned above, Mr. Grierson remarks, "On the whole, the correction of grammatical errors (in answering the Department's questions on cards) is well done. Happily, 90 per cent. of our children are incapable of such barbarities of language as seem to come under the notice of the Department's English expert. Most likely the examples have been culled from English text-books. I should like to mention that during the past year several boys, fresh from their native Yorkshire heath and Yorkshire Board schools, have passed through my hands. Their dialect was as atrociously uncouth as I remember it thirty-five years ago; their general school-work fell far short of that of boys of their own age and standard in New Zealand schools. Success at examinations has been seriously discounted by the fact that the test-cards issued by the Department make use of grammatical terms banned by the syllabus; and further, by injudicious selection of extracts (chiefly in Standard IV and Standard V) for analysis and synthesis. A large number of the extracts contain language and ideas quite beyond children's comprehension." Mr. Purdie says: "The English test set by the Department in lieu of the formal grammar previously given is very poorly done. The verbiage enclosing the question too often obscures the requirement. The abolition of the use of set terms in language-lessons has been, in my opinion, the reverse of successful." These criticisms of the questions set in the Department's English cards for the Standard IV and Standard V classes are not beside the mark. I would add that, while faulty sentences are often duly corrected, a satisfactory or indeed any reason for the correction is rarely given. This points to a want of grounding in the principles of syntax—in general so simple in the mother-tongue—and in the placing and correct use of words.

While it must be allowed that there is real weakness in the teaching of composition in the Standards IV and V classes, the fact that much creditable and not a little very good work is met with in Standard VI shows that the weakness may be easily exaggerated. Much of this weakness is traceable to the use of unsuitable, and in the higher classes of too elementary, subjects, and to the recurrence of similar or cognate subjects in the work of successive classes. The lesson-periods are also frequently too short for dealing adequately with the subjects set, while the practice of doing much of the work on slates prevents thorough and careful correction. I think that all written exercises in composition from Standard III upwards should be done on paper, preferably in special exercise-books.

Considerable facility in finding matter is a point teachers should encourage in every possible way. In the higher classes facility is an object of equal importance with accuracy. Excessive attention to neatness, waste of time in the distribution of pens, exercise-books, &c., an insufficient length of time for the lesson—these and similar causes may not merely reduce the amount of composition done by a class within such narrow limits as to be almost valueless, but may even encourage the natural slowness of thought and expression which it is one of the chief aims of the lessons in English to eradicate.*

As few school-children have gained the mental maturity required for reflection, I think that exercises in which familiar objects and animals are compared, likenesses and differences and their effects

* See the English Board of Education's suggestions for the consideration of teachers, &c.