

being here easily seen, might be more widely used with no small benefit. The horse and the cow, a lamp and a candle, a street and a country road, a school and a church, a coach and a railway-car, are easy examples of this kind. Stories suggested by well-chosen pictures and the so-called autobiographies of animals and other objects are also serviceable, and have the merits of affording scope for the exercise and the cultivation of the imagination, which is apt to fare badly in this age of utilitarian bias in all departments of education.

Though a good deal of attention is now given to oral composition the training is, I consider, rather disappointing, and methods of treatment are not very promising. The reluctance of pupils to stand up and speak with something like freedom and confidence on topics well within their knowledge has not yet been generally overcome. It is often attributed to shyness, but the shyness does not greatly obtrude itself in other ways, and but for this manifestation of it would hardly be suspected. The difficulty is partly the natural outcome of a still rather prevalent error in our teaching-methods—the error of telling and pouring in, which we should teach by drawing out, by fostering freer self-expression, and by training pupils to more resolute effort to clothe their thoughts and ideas in such words as they can find. Oral statement of pupils' knowledge and ideas is so intimately bound up with every part of school-work, and so constantly in use in the daily treatment of lessons of every kind, that readiness in using it should be a characteristic of every well-managed class and school. Teachers will do well to indulge in some honest heart-searching where their pupils fail seriously in this accomplishment.

"Composition, either oral or written, should form part of every lesson given in a school; it should be the common bond which unifies the whole curriculum, and its effect in increasing clearness of thought and expression will be evident in every part of the school-work."* In connection with oral composition useful help can be got from many recent small school manuals issued in great variety by British publishing firms.†

With reference to drawing, Mr. Stewart writes: "This subject is poorly taught in many schools. The chief faults are (1) the pencil is held too near the point and is gripped too firmly; (2) the drawings are too small; (3) they are too laboured, and the use of the eraser is abused; teachers should endeavour to do away with the slavery of slow drawing; (4) too much attention is paid to mere finish, whilst form and proportion are neglected. Better results would be obtained if less attention were directed to the lines, and more to the spaces enclosed by them. The drawing-instructors are undoubtedly improving the teaching of this subject; I had no difficulty in telling at sight if a teacher had been attending the drawing-classes." A great deal of creditable drawing is, however, to be seen in a considerable number of schools, and especially in the larger ones. Original designs are not as common as could be wished; such drawings should always be marked "original design"; the dates of the drawings should always be marked on the finished page. Drawing from objects is too little practised; for blackboard illustrations some mastery of this is most desirable for teachers.‡ In general a special drawing-test was given to all pupils who sat for certificates of proficiency, and a large proportion of these gained 60 per cent. of the marks or more.

In several respects satisfactory progress has been made in teaching Course A, or observational geography. In this connection lessons out-of-doors and excursions to the neighbouring places of interest might well be more freely used; excursions are specially necessary in town schools. In country schools the course of instruction should be chosen with reference to the geographical features of the neighbourhood, taking that term in a large sense. It is not intended that every topic mentioned in the syllabus should be dealt with in every school, regardless of local conditions. Plans and measurements of the play-ground and the roads or streets immediately adjoining the school should be made out by the pupils of Standards III and IV: a plan prepared by the teacher is not enough. In every play-ground should be laid out a level plot, say 10 ft. by 8 ft., neatly bordered by wood, for making relief maps of countries that are being studied. A supply of sand or friable soil should be kept alongside. It is much to be regretted that the Department has not yet issued trustworthy relief maps of New Zealand for use in the public schools. The most grotesque travesties of the real features of our island home are now being constantly made by pupils and teachers. Many teachers are gathering collections of pictures that are most helpful in making lessons on features not occurring in their districts intelligible and interesting. Mr. Purdie remarks that the study of Course A geography "has not been observational, except in a few cases, even when the material existed in the vicinity." This neglect, as he says, ignores the whole purpose of the syllabus in this subject, and it cannot be too strongly reprobated by the Inspectors. In treating of the formation of "dew" and of "clouds," great confusion arises from the use of the term "steam" instead of "vapour of water." In popular language "steam" means both "vapour of water," which is invisible, and "fine water dust" in masses such as we see before the spout of the kettle, in a fog, or over a moving locomotive engine, all of which are visible. In this connection the word "steam" had better be altogether avoided. Many of our pupils are learning that "water dust" or cloud (when the mass is large enough to deserve that name) is lighter than air, and that for that reason it floats. It floats in air for the very same reason that fine mud floats in water; if the water becomes still the mud sinks to the bottom, and in like manner in still evenings the clouds sink down to lower and warmer levels of the air, and are changed back into vapour. The observation of this fact is well within the powers of all older school-children. Our pupils are also being constantly taught that "the sun draws the vapour up" into the air. The heat of the sun truly changes water on the earth's surface into vapour, but the diffusion and rising of the vapour are due to its being a gas; for like all gases it spreads about among other gases with which it is freely in contact. The rising is

* Board of Education's suggestions.

† I can specially recommend Charles and Dible's "Oral Composition Manuals" by Mark Hughes—three parts, 2d. each; Teacher's Book, 3d. This firm has issued a great number of books of value to the profession.

‡ Mr. Wallace, drawing-instructor, has, at my request, examined Symon's "Object Drawing for Schools" (Charles and Dible; 2s. 6d.), and recommends it to the notice of teachers interested in the subject.