This causes much unnecessary waste of time. A small text-book containing suitable material for the study should be in every pupil's hands, and the work should go on smartly, and often in the light of previous preparation. Frequent rapid revision would then be practicable, and the whole treatment would thus gain in thoroughness and intelligence. For satisfactory work in this department of English study, pupils must be trained to give reasons for the arrangement of the clauses and phrases they consider most suitable. At present this is insufficiently attended to. Reasons for correcting sentences set for criticism or amendment should always be required; the Inspectors seldom find pupils ready to risk an attempt in this direction. It is only by firmly insisting on a clear statement of reasons for changes in the placing of clauses and phrases or in the syntax that the principles that govern these matters can be elicited and made familiar. Discouraging the use of such self-interpreting technical terms as adjective-clause, adjective-phrase, adverb-clause, and so on, which finds so prominent a place in the official syllabus, is doing much harm. Short readily intelligible names for the elements in a sentence are really indispensable to a clear and rapid consideration of their relations. The vague, roundabout ways of asking questions, which are abundantly exemplified in the English cards issued by the Department, instead of helping pupils to think clearly, simply tend to mystify them.

As to the composition exercises, the first and greatest merit they can possess is fulness of matter—evidence of a ready power of thinking. This is the first and also the chief thing to secure; once attained, the other virtues of good arrangement and clear, accurate, and forcible statement will not be so hard to acquire. These virtues, we must recognise, are secondary products and necessarily of later growth. Insistence on the use of short sentences will do much to foster clearness and precision of statement; this point calls for much more strict attention than it generally receives. The long, rambling, disjointed sentence, taking up six or eight lines of foolscap paper, should not be tolerated. A full, varied, and suitable selection of subjects for composition exercises is a most important aid to the teaching of this subject. In few schools are these lists as satisfactory as might be expected. In all schools, and especially in schools where several classes occupy the same room, the subject lesson for successive years should never overlap nor even be very closely allied. This fault is far too prevalent, and through it teachers are constantly gaining wrong impressions of what their pupils can do. The result is that pupils work year after year on a narrow round of ideas, and are not sufficiently called on to exercise thought and reflection in dealing with their exercises. Much of the feebleness of our training in composition is, in my belief, traceable to this one defect. Among subjects suitable for children's exercises, comparisons of animals, plants, and familiar objects should find an important place. "A Candle and a Lamp compared," "A Pine-tree and an Oak-tree compared," are samples of a long list of suitable topics. Descriptions of familiar places and scenes—an orchard, a country store, a blacksmith's shop, a street in a town, a wharf, &c., will afford many suitable topics. Accounts of visits to places and of journeys are also in place, provided that objects seen and *what is thought about them* form the substance of the exercise. The trashy statements of time of starting, of stopping, of arrival, &c., that usually form the staple of such efforts, should not be received as satisfactory by any teacher. The exercise of the imagination can be encouraged by the use of the so-called "autobiographies," and by stories suggested by suitable pictures exhibited to the class. General and abstract topics are suitable only for the highest class, and even there they should be sparingly used. For teaching punctuation, the reproduction in a condensed form of fairly full stories or narratives is very helpful.

Of course, numerous exercises will be given on topics dealt with in other lessons, such as nature-study, civics, health, science, geography, and history, and especially on the pictures and thoughts presented in the poems read in class—above all in those that have been committed to memory. What could be more suitable for this purpose than an account of the life and character of our friend "The Village Blacksmith," or of the early life of the slave as set forth in "The Slave's Dream"? I cannot recall having ever seen in a public school a composition exercise on such a subject.

Help in finding matter for exercises in composition should be given with caution. The *training to think* is one of our chief aims in the teaching, and it must be largely defeated by too liberal suggestions. Probably asking a series of questions about the subject—questions which pupils are not to answer orally or at the moment—is the best way of rousing thought without offering too much by way of suggestion and guidance. In the more advanced classes many suggestive questions might be asked by the pupils themselves, the teacher supplementing them if needful.

I am strongly of opinion that *all work* in composition and sentence-structure that is not done orally should be written in pencil or in ink on paper, and be carefully examined by the teacher, being afterwards considered and amended by the pupil. A great deal of the work now done on slate is wiped out without being properly examined or turned to account for the pupil's training. This is indeed largely unavoidable where slates are used. A fairly good unruled paper, such as is being used at the Normal School, and there costs sixpence a head per annum, could easily be provided for this purpose, and in the smaller schools the older pupils might do the whole of their work in this subject in exercise-books.

Oral composition is making fair progress in the lower classes of many schools. The aims of many teachers are, however, very humble. To answer questions in full sentence form is no doubt satisfactory for very young pupils, but something more should be expected in Standard I. Here the pupils might be encouraged to give several consecutive sentences—short ones, of course—about the subject chosen, and they should be required to give, by way of revision, a connected account of matters elicited by answers to a series of questions given to single pupils. I have dealt with this topic at inordinate length in the hope that the suggestions offered may help to place the teaching of composition on a sounder footing. Teachers must realise that more can often be done than they are now doing, and that earnest thought and planning will be required if real progress is to be made. I incorporate here an extract from Mr. Stewart's report to me, that merits attention. "One point deserves special attention—nine-tenths of the writing of adult life is the writing of different kinds of letters, yet here I find the weakest work. Even in the best-taught schools this is