There is little improvement in oral composition, and but few succeed in turning the every-day oral answering to good account as a means of developing the art of free and accurate verbal expression. This subject is better handled at the Normal School than at any other with which I have lately come in contact. In general, pupils show unmistakable reluctance to venture on telling, with any freedom or fullness, what is in their minds. This reluctance must be overcome before oral composition can seriously help us in training our pupils to free expression through speech. Informal grammar and sentence-structure receive a good deal of attention, but many children learn very little from the lessons. There is a very general feeling that the English exercises provided as tests by the Department do not direct the efforts of pupils and teachers in the most helpful way. In correcting faulty sentences reasons for the changes made are still rarely given. Teachers need to attend to this.

In general, writing and spelling continue to be well taught, though the work done in the latter at the recent Proficiency Examination was in many cases poor. The prevalence of mistakes in quite common words is too much in evidence, and hard to account for if the correction of written exercises is habitually careful. The incorrect use of the apostrophe and of the words "there" and "their" is also a common weakness. Of the dictation exercises at the recent Proficiency Examination Mr. Crowe says, "Mistakes in simple words, 'whoes' for 'whose,' and 'thoes' for 'those,' were exceedingly numerous." This might well appear incredible, and I think it argues no slight carelessness on the part of many of the examinees.

The improvement in the teaching of number in the preparatory classes that has taken place in recent years is now barely maintained. Speaking of the smaller schools of the South Central District Mr. Cox says, "In the primer classes the comprehension of number is but indifferently known. Children are allowed to pass too rapidly from small numbers to larger ones." In the lower classes the place-value of figures is often imperfectly known, and many pupils are unable to write down thirty-seven tens correctly, or to read the whole number of tens or of hundreds in such a number as 3749. In such cases no proper understanding of the decimal system of notation can have been gained.

Though the time devoted to arithmetic is ample, and the teaching is in general careful and intelligent, the subject is not now as well known as it has been in the past. In the Standard V class decided weakness is apparent in perhaps the majority of schools, and there is considerable weakness in the work of the Standard II class also. This is in large part due to the number of new principles that are introduced in the programmes of these classes. The Inspectors are almost unanimous in testifying to the poor work frequently done in the Standard V class. "The work of Standard V is still the weakest. I notice this in all classes of schools" (Mr. Stewart). Mr. Burnside writes, "The weakness in Standard VI is doubtless due to the inability of many pupils to master the difficulties of Standard V arithmetic. Inaccurate work in decimals, and consequently in sums based on the metric system, is responsible for many failures in Standard VI." Mr. Garrard writes, "I find arithmetic generally well done. Standards V and II are usually the classes that come to grief in this subject, and these are the classes in which the demands of the syllabus are greatest." I transcribe Mr. Grierson's decided comments in full: "Arithmetic is undoubtedly the weakest of all the vital subjects in almost every school. With a lighter syllabus, and practically the same time devoted to the subject, the results fall short of those obtained fifteen years ago. I am inclined to believe that the weakness creeps in, in Standard II, is not fortified in Standard III, where the syllabus is easy out of all proportion to the requirements of the other standards, and is too confirmed to be corrected later. In the larger schools good work is done in Class P., and also in Standard I, when under the management of the infant-mistress. Standard II often falls into the hands of an inexperienced or inferior teacher, as evidenced by the indifferent appearance generally made by this class. Head teachers should give special care to the teaching of Standard II, and then, with a solid foundation to build on, overlap a portion of Standard IV work in Standard III. Mental arithmetic was fairly done."

I have in previous reports repeatedly pointed out that in the larger schools there is too little oral teaching and practice of arithmetic at the blackboard, and too much continuous desk-work under the general supervision of the teacher. I have over and over again urged head teachers to require their assistants to increase the amount of blackboard and oral drill. What is there to prevent a section of a large class from having a great deal of blackboard and oral drill while the others are working at desks from their arithmetic books? This board practice can be quite well given without neglecting the due supervision of the desk-work. As the syllabus truly says, "Too much emphasis cannot be laid on the fact that success in teaching arithmetic is proportional to the attention given by the teacher to the oral work at every stage." Even in Standard I, where the instruction is intended "to secure the power of working *orally* addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of the numbers 1 to 100; neither operating number nor the result being greater than 100," accurate oral work with numbers of any size within these limits has not been very generally met with in the schools I have myself visited. Mr. Cox mentions that "many teachers" [in his district] "say that they have no time for mental arithmetic, which plainly shows that they look upon this branch of arithmetic as an isolated extra, and not as the most useful introduction to every new rule." No graver blunder than this could be made. I am glad to think that this experience is exceptional. The clear setting-out and explanation of the steps in all sums of the nature of problems still leaves much to be desired, though in many schools they are well done.

At the Inspectors' annual visits the arithmetic of Standard VI was not very often examined except orally and by mental exercises, as nearly all the pupils of that class would be examined later at the Certificate of Proficiency Examination. The way in which the oral and mental exercises were dealt with gave me no special indication of serious weakness in this subject. The results at the Proficiency Examination were, however, most disappointing, no fewer than 498 public-