

READING.—In the majority of our schools reading is characterized by satisfactory fluency and intelligent expression. In a few schools, however, it is not taught on educative and up-to-date lines, and is consequently marred by many defects. Many of the lessons we have seen given have lacked that essential of any successful lesson—a definite, predetermined, and well-thought-out aim, and as a consequence we too often look in vain to see special treatment given during the course of a lesson to any one of the elements of good reading. Even the purely subsidiary features of the mechanism of reading, such as purity of articulation and correct syllabification, are far too generally only touched on incidentally, and not taught thoroughly and systematically as they certainly should be. In a few of the smaller schools in charge of less experienced teachers scarcely any effort is made on the part of the teacher to require his pupils to overcome the natural tendency towards slovenly and lazy articulation, with the result that the reading frequently degenerates into an indistinct and mumbling enumeration of what may or may not be words. Many young children on first coming to school are unable to speak plainly, and need careful training in the use of their vocal organs. We are in too much haste to teach them to read; it would be much better to teach them to speak correctly. Much of the time that is now spent on reading aloud might with more profit be devoted to voice-training and the cultivation of a refined habit of speech. Not more than one child in a hundred will in after-life be called upon to read aloud, but every child will be better fitted for the life in front of him by the possession of a refined and cultivated speaking-voice. We fully recognise that there are many subjects to be taught, and but few hours to teach them in, yet the teacher who has the future success of his pupils ever before him will, we are sure, be able to find some time for this important study of voice-training. As children naturally imitate the speech of those about them, it behoves the teacher to be guarded as to the purity and flexibility of his own speech. The teacher himself should make a careful study of phonetics, in order that he may have, among other things, a thorough grasp of the vowel-sounds and a sound knowledge of how they are formed by the organs of speech. In our best-conducted schools a fair amount of attention is given to reading for effect. The pupils have evidently had some drilling in how to pitch, inflect, and modulate their voices. Reading for effect should be preceded by a careful study of the spirit and meaning of the lesson read. A child cannot be expected to phrase and emphasize intelligently if this preliminary study of the sense of the passage has been neglected. There are a few teachers, however, who take a too narrow view of the treatment of the comprehension of a reading lesson, inasmuch as they evidently think they have achieved all that is to be achieved when they have succeeded in getting the pupils to give formal definitions of the words, though the thought expressed by the words, on account of their application in the lesson, is lost. Exact definition is, comparatively speaking, almost non-essential; the fact behind the words is the essential. In order to broaden the intellectual horizon of the child, the cultured and well-read teacher, feeling that more of the world outside should be imported into the schoolroom, and that school is not a thing wholly apart from the community, will not be content to confine himself to the bare limits of the reading-lesson, but will go outside of it and enrich and brighten his teaching by drawing on his own knowledge and experience.

ARITHMETIC.—There has been a marked improvement in the teaching of this subject in the P. classes. Teachers have begun to recognise that, if the work done in the preparatory classes is to form a solid foundation for the work in the standards, more attention must be given to drilling the little ones in addition, subtraction, and multiplication, and also in the rapid and continuous addition of at least five or six figures. In some of our schools, however, the treatment is still defective and the aim bad. The need of rapidity and accuracy in the mechanical manipulation of figures is largely lost sight of in the misdirected effort to teach the child to think by forcing him to wrestle with problems even before he is capable of realising the language they are couched in. Moreover, some teachers seem to think that no sound progress can be made unless the initial stages are almost wholly concrete. They seem to overlook the fact that the child-mind naturally thinks almost wholly in the concrete, and that it has to be trained to think in the abstract. Consequently there is a tendency to overestimate the use of tablets, wads, ball-frames, and other mechanical devices for teaching numbers in the concrete. These devices are good in their place, but should be made only supplementary to blackboard arithmetic. In Standards I, II, and III the arithmetic is comparatively strong, and in all the standards is neatly and logically set out. The work of Standard III was exceptionally well done, and this no doubt is in a great measure due to the fact that the requirements of this class in arithmetic are not very much in advance of those of Standard II. We think that the syllabus might well be modified in the direction of increasing the amount of work required in this subject of Standard III. In Standards IV, V, and VI we have again to report that the results of our examinations almost invariably reveal a lamentable weakness, not so much in the method but in the accuracy of the work. This inaccuracy is apparently not due to the limited amount of time devoted to this subject nor to the lack of intelligent treatment, but mainly to a misconception of the demands of the syllabus. No doubt the syllabus seems to unduly emphasize the cultural value of this subject, and teachers by a too slavish and unintelligent adherence to it have largely underestimated the utility value of arithmetic, with the result that accuracy and speed in fundamental operations are made to play a subordinate part to that of learning specialised rules and solving complex problems. It is not to be wondered at that business men complain that the boys that come to them from our schools have an insufficient training in the elementary processes. Whether the reason assigned is the correct one or not, the fact remains that the tests set by the Department in arithmetic are by no means so well done as in previous years. Indeed, it is quite unusual to find a pupil of Standard VI clearing the whole paper set.

WRITING.—The method of treatment of this subject shows a steady improvement. Teachers have given evidence of a desire to treat it in a more systematic and intelligent manner, and closer attention is being paid to the general principles underlying the style of writing taught. When