

Writing is generally very satisfactory. I must, however, enter my strongest protest against the use of Vere Foster's copybooks, which, from the fact of their being specially recommended in the Government regulations, are coming into general use. I cannot see how writing can be taught from them. Their supposed superiority appears to be based on discarding, as unnecessary, any systematic formation of letters, and the pupil is supposed to gain a fluent hand by a process of pure imitation, and gradually improved scribbling. I do not object to the use of an advanced book of the series after a correct, formal hand has been acquired; but for all the earlier stages I would advocate the use of books giving a more systematic formation of letters. The formal hand thus acquired will in after practice be greatly modified, but the rapid style then adopted should be always thoroughly legible; while, if correct forms have never been taught, the writing is likely to degenerate into an illegible succession of fluent dashes. I have noticed that, where good results in writing have been obtained with the use of Foster's books, his system has never been followed, the formation of the letters being taught according to the old plan.

The oral answers to questions on etymology and syntax, and the written parsing and analysis of sentences, show that the elements of grammar are well taught; but the scholars appear quite unable to apply their grammatical knowledge to composition. In almost every instance composition is beyond examination. In all the written answers of the higher standards facts are stated without grammatical connection or intelligent sequence; and in the direct exercises in composition the pupils utterly fail both in formation of ideas and in ability to express them. The subject is certainly one presenting some difficulty, and one in which the results are of slow attainment; but it presents no insuperable difficulties where it is systematically taken. I would suggest that in all the earlier stages the subject should be taught orally, with the aid of the black-board—the ideas or headings of the subject being first elicited from the class and noted on the board, these headings then to be arranged in some natural order, and afterwards drafted into sentences. If this or any similar course is systematically followed the scholars should in a short time acquire the power and habit of intelligently treating any simple subject.

The teaching of history presents considerable difficulty to some teachers, but under the arrangement in the new standards the subject is being more efficiently taught.

The results in geography are very good, but there is a tendency to depend too much upon the acquisition of facts from a text-book, in place of intelligent oral teaching from the globe or maps. I cannot too strongly urge the necessity of oral teaching in this class of subjects in all the earlier stages. I would not admit the use of a text-book in grammar, geography, or history until the Fourth Standard is reached, and in the subsequent stages the lessons set from the text-book should be regularly supplemented by oral teaching.

Repetition of poetry has quite failed in what I conceive to be its most important use. In most cases it is literally repetition, and of equal value with the repetition of selections from the vocabulary of an unknown tongue—in a few cases the meaning of the words are taught, and the allusions explained; and in a very few instances it is made an elocutionary exercise. These latter are only means to an end, the end being a thorough appreciation of the spirit and moving power of some of our simpler classical poetry. In the absence of direct religious and moral teaching, I know of no simpler and more powerful means of elevating and refining the feelings and principles of the scholars.

Elementary science, drawing, and singing have been introduced and faithfully taught where teachers have themselves possessed the necessary knowledge of the subjects; but the results of the first year's work have seldom been worth recording.

Particular care has been taken to test the value of the object lessons given under the new regulations, and in only three cases could the results be recognized as of the slightest value. In the majority of cases where a course of lessons has been given the primary object has apparently been to teach a number of facts, and the results could more readily have been obtained by giving the scholar a list of facts to be learned by rote. An object-lesson properly given will of course convey valuable information, but its primary object should be to develop the perceptive and reasoning powers of the child, to cultivate his powers of observation and comparison, and generally to brighten his intelligence. These lessons, properly given, should have a most salutary effect in correcting the mental dyspepsia which is commonly apparent.

The introduction of the so-called extra subjects has called forth much adverse criticism, but I must accord them my full support. It appears to me that any opposition on the part of teachers and the public arises from a misconception of the force and use of these subjects in the school syllabus. The amount of direct knowledge of these subjects actually imparted is necessarily very small, and is of secondary importance; but the value of the lessons, as a means of true education, in developing the intelligence and quickening the perception can scarcely be over-estimated. It is the greatest fallacy possible to suppose that the introduction of every extra subject adds so much independent work to the arduous duties of the teacher. They are simple, but effective, aids to the regular school work, and every teacher who from experience knows their value would continue to use them in the intelligent development of the mind if they were expunged from the syllabus. Many teachers, having hitherto had no opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of these extra subjects, see no immediate results from the indifferent teaching they are able to give—they, consequently, have no just conception of a child's capabilities in the matter, and become indifferent. But this apathy in the acquirement of a knowledge of the new subjects will, I think, rapidly disappear. The aim of education, even in its most restricted sense, is the development of the intellectual powers of the child, and an efficient teacher must be prepared to master any aid to this end. To meet the difficulty it is proposed to form Saturday classes in Timaru, for a short course of instruction in science, drawing, and vocal music.

Great difference of opinion exists as to the value of home-lessons, and I am constantly asked for advice in the matter. In most schools I think far too much reliance is placed on this work. Even if the capabilities of children were fairly equal, the home influences, and facilities for home study, vary so considerably that the work produced is very unequal. In some cases, from lack of time or interest, the lessons are badly examined, and in others the time devoted to thorough correction might possibly produce better results if devoted to class-teaching. It is not the length of time spent in school work,