

advanced as Standard V., the greatest difficulty has been experienced in adapting the time-table to the code, so great is the number of subjects, and of the distinct grades into which each is subdivided. In such schools I must candidly confess that I consider the number of independent lessons at present required to be taught too great. I believe that, unless some restriction of the number of subjects to be taught as separate lessons is made, the quality of the teaching in the smaller schools must deteriorate, and that the essentials of an elementary education will have to be more or less sacrificed for matters of secondary importance. In the large schools the work has been much more easy to overtake, and in them the strain on the teachers has hardly been so great as that on the scholars. So far as I can judge, the present course of instruction can, without much difficulty, be overtaken in its entirety in schools where there are three or more teachers; where there are two the difficulty becomes greater; with one, and a large number of classes, the difficulty is insuperable, and a satisfactory compromise is all I have expected or, indeed, could myself propose. Last year I pointed out that the staff allowed by the Board was too meagre, and I am still of opinion that a more liberal staff would do much to improve the character of the education imparted in the Board's schools.

INSTRUCTION.—I think the returns appended to this report afford sufficient evidence of the general efficiency of the schools. Of the 43 schools examined by me unaided, or with Mr. Taylor's assistance, 11 made a percentage of 90 or more, 13 reached from 70 to 90, and 8 from 50 to 70. Eleven made a percentage below 50, a result which is, to say the least, very unsatisfactory. Next year I intend from time to time to report for the Board's consideration all cases where the percentage is below 50. On the whole the great majority of the schools have been taught with great fidelity and no inconsiderable skill. In a large number the work was in many respects excellent, and gave proof of energetic work on the part of the teachers and the pupils. One cannot help noticing the growing desire to secure good results, nor admiring the perseverance and enthusiasm with which success is courted. While it is a pleasure to accord praise where it is due, it is equally necessary to notice what is not deserving of commendation. To some points of the latter character I shall, *inter alia*, advert in the rest of my remarks under this head. In consequence of the enlargement of the number of subjects taught, the amount of time formerly devoted to some of them has necessarily been somewhat curtailed. In some schools reading, comprehension of meaning, and repetition of poetry appear to have suffered from diminished attention. In fluency and distinctness of reading there has been a very great improvement within the last few years; but in intelligent expression and rendering of the meaning there has been less cause to be satisfied with what has been achieved. This defect in the reading manifestly arises from failure to understand the meaning, which, again, is a result of the general character of the teaching. Comprehension is seldom made a substantive lesson, but is usually combined with reading, grammar, poetry, or some other lesson—an arrangement which is not to be objected to, for comprehension and intelligence are the outcome of the general spirit and method of the teaching, rather than specific results following a specific mode of proceeding: I fear it is often thrust too far into the background by this alliance with another lesson. During the past year I have repeatedly listened to examinations on lessons where comprehension of the meaning was all but wholly disregarded. There were numerous questions about what was said, what was done, what followed, and so on; but a repetition of the words in the book was accepted as a very satisfactory answer, no question being raised as to whether they were understood or not. Few neglect examination on the meaning of lessons, but in carrying out the exercise the error of confining attention to the incidents of a story or the points in a description is frequently committed. The questions appended to the lessons in the earlier reading-books turn wholly on such matters, and it is likely enough that many have accepted these as models of examination on the meaning, and have thus got used to overlooking the explanation of words, phrases, and even entire sentences. To do justice to this subject, the importance of sound comprehension must be constantly and consciously held in view in connection with all the work of the school. Reading-lessons, as I think, are frequently too long to admit of proper examination on them. For practice in reading lessons of some length are doubtless necessary, but they might be varied by shorter ones for more complete examination.

Poster's writing-books have now been very generally introduced in the schools I have visited, and I think that considerable improvement has arisen from the adoption of a smaller hand at the beginning of the course. The mechanical arrangement of this set of copy-books is such as greatly to facilitate superintendence of the work, and to make faults and careless writing readily evident. These aids are not always turned to account so well as they might be. I have marked books showing neglect of the guiding-lines, or persistent errors in forming and linking letters, as falling short of the standard required for a pass. Where possible, I have examined the home and school exercise-books, which were in a good many cases done with great care and neatness. In the great majority of schools, however, the writing in the exercise-books was much inferior to that in the copy-books, and frequently in a different style. The practice of writing in two different styles is one which every teacher should do his utmost to discourage in his pupils. I have in many cases had occasion to complain of the want of ordinary care in preserving these books.

In arithmetic the work of the year has given me great satisfaction. Some schools failed egregiously in it, but on the whole the subject was accurately and intelligently known. It receives a great deal of attention, perhaps more than its fair share, and is now undoubtedly one of the most efficiently-taught subjects in the whole course of instruction. Mental arithmetic has not been taught regularly except in a few cases, but I have directed attention to it wherever I found it omitted from the time-table.

In grammar the work required in the different standards has been considerably lessened. The subject continues to be carefully taught, at least so far as parsing and analysis are concerned. English composition has been examined with considerable care in every school I have visited. The results have, on the whole, been rather disheartening. In many cases very little attention has been given to this most important subject, and even in the best schools the work was very unequal. The great difficulty is the arrangement of what is written into sentences. There is wanting a sense of what a sentence is like, of where it should begin, where it should end, and how many