

libraries, more would be done, I feel sure, to induce and foster a taste for general reading than could be effected by any other means; and every adult colonist would, no doubt, yield the most ready acquiescence to a scheme that would afford so much pleasure and advantage to the rising generation. Spelling continues to be good. Copy-book writing is in the main good, but slate writing often quite the reverse, and a similar remark applies to that of the exercise books. Most of the children in the junior classes continue to write with short blunt pencils, a practice that gives their teachers no end of trouble when they begin to write with a pen. I do not think sufficient attention is given to pen drill in the earlier stages of writing in copy-books. Grammar is intelligently taught in a fair proportion of schools. Less prominence is given to definitions, and much more to the functions of words, phrases, and sentences. There is great improvement, too, in the teaching of composition. Geography is for the most part worked up by the pupils. I do not know that there is any serious objection to this, provided the children are trained to learn it in an intelligent manner. After the teacher has given a lesson in the geography of a country, the pupils ought certainly to be made to fix the lesson in their minds by their own personal effort; but they ought not to be allowed, as they often are, to grind up all that the text-book says without localising the information by constant reference to the map. It is no uncommon thing for a child to be able to repeat quite glibly the names of places and what the places are famous for, without having any but the vaguest notion of the exact position of them. The results gained in history continue to be unsatisfactory in Standard III. In many cases the inferior answering is certainly due to unintelligent teaching. I regard it, for instance, as certain evidence of improper methods if the children cannot point out on the map the localities in which the events they have learnt took place. A great number of children are unable to do this. The senior standards generally show very fair acquaintance with the periods assigned to them for study.

The character of the work done in arithmetic is still highly unsatisfactory. An inordinate proportion of the time devoted to it is consumed in the manipulation of figures—in transforming from one denomination to another, and in adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing mere symbols, behind which lies not the ghost of an idea. The majority of children in Standards I. to IV. are, in fact, occupied during the greater portion of the year in mere ciphering, and the study of arithmetic is postponed till within two or three months of the examination. If the aim of arithmetical teaching were to make calculating machines of the children this plan might, perhaps, succeed, but it can never succeed in making them arithmeticians. It ought, in my opinion, to be reversed. From Standard II. upwards the children should spend not more than one-fourth of their time in mere ciphering. As soon as a process is fairly known, abundant exercises in its application should be given. In this way the process becomes fixed in the mind, and in the fixing thereof a sound knowledge of its application to the practical concerns of life is acquired, besides which the pupil's intelligence is cultivated and his reasoning power strengthened. The traditions of arithmetical teaching are bad, and it is really surprising how little modern scientific method has affected this part of primary school work. See to the ciphering and let arithmetic take care of itself has been, and appears still to be, the motto of a great many teachers. This absurd method of grinding at rules and unmeaning symbols for the greater part of the child's school life cannot, in my opinion, be too severely condemned. Such work, as Mr. Fitch justly observes, does more to deaden than to invigorate the thinking faculty of any one who practises it.

Standard II. broke down badly in notation. The first question given in every paper was an addition sum, the addends of which were written in words. More than two-thirds of the children examined by me failed in this sum. The decline in the percentage gained by this Standard is, I believe, wholly due to this general breakdown in notation. The notation of Standard III. was equally weak, and large numbers failed to work correctly the sum that had to be notated. We gave an additional sum—a problem—in Standards II. and III. last year, but a very small proportion of the children succeeded in working it correctly. It is worth recording, as we have always strongly advised teachers to make their pupils do it, that those children that took the trouble to explain what each step of the work represented almost invariably succeeded in solving the problem. I may mention a remarkable instance of this. In a class of forty-two pupils (Standard II.) only four obtained the correct answer to the problem. These four explained what each line of the work represented; the others did not do so, and every one of them failed to work it correctly. Again, I have to report that the addition and multiplication tables are very imperfectly learnt in the junior classes. These tables are the foundation of rapid and accurate calculation, and ought to receive a large share of attention in Standard I. and the classes below it. The practice that commonly obtains of giving children easy sums to do before the tables are well known, induces counting by units, a habit that is most difficult to eradicate when it has taken firm possession of a child. Tables, and exercises on the tables, ought to constitute the major portion of the arithmetic of these classes.

It is gratifying to be able to report fair improvement in the method of giving object lessons, but I regret to be unable to make a similar observation respecting elementary science teaching. The schools in which science is taught in a rational manner might be counted on one's fingers. Children for the most part learn it from books, or work up notes of what their teacher tells them about the subjects of study. They are not trained to use their eyes, and to reason upon what they see, and science teaching that fails to do this is well nigh worthless as an educative instrument. The lessons given may be termed information lessons, and, of course, are much better than none at all, but they are not worthy of any higher name. Science is the foundation of technics, and, though I am not sanguine enough to think it possible to give technical training, except drawing, either in primary or secondary schools, I do think that boys ought to leave school with a knowledge of the principles upon which technical and industrial processes depend sufficient to be of real use to them in their subsequent career. The application of these principles must, however, be studied in the workshop; it cannot, I believe, be successfully taught in our schools.

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