

follow without looking at the text, the teacher will soon find his pupils responding to the greater demand put upon them for distinct and deliberate utterance. In most schools a fair amount of time is daily spent in testing the pupils' comprehension of what is read in the class. The answering is sometimes very good, but it is not an uncommon occurrence to meet with a class so badly trained that after repeated trials one has to give up the attempt to get a full and intelligent answer to any question.

SPELLING.—The classes which showed the greatest weakness in the formal spelling and dictation exercises were the Fourth and Fifth Standards. In the First, Second, and Sixth Standards spelling was usually very good. The dictation exercises of the higher standards suffered in most cases from careless punctuation. As usual, the exercises in composition exhibited much worse spelling than any one except a schoolmaster or an examiner could believe possible. A boy can write a fairly difficult paragraph of eight or ten lines from his reading book, with a dozen hard words for spelling, without making a single mistake; and yet his composition may bristle with errors in words of every-day use. "I seen a horke sitting on a goss fence" is no exaggeration. A Sixth Standard boy, who was absolutely correct in dictation and spelling, wrote "benevolent instachusan" in his grammar paper. "The tame cat is the *dwaugh* of the species" is a puzzle from a Third Standard girl's paper.

WRITING.—Few pupils fail to secure a pass in writing. At the same time the quality is not generally much more than passable. With sufficient care in supervision, not only of copybooks, but of all written matter, a great improvement might certainly be made. Too little use is made of the blackboard in giving direct instruction in writing; in fact, direct instruction practically ceases with the First and Second Standards in all but a few schools, the practice to be got from the copybooks and in transcribing passages from the reading books being deemed sufficient for the other standards. Many of the pupils get into a very bad style of writing from the pressure put upon them in taking down "notes" on various subjects; for this is always a hurried exercise. Even Third Standard children have their note books, with page after page of almost illegible stuff, supposed to be "notes of history."

ARITHMETIC.—In all the classes up to and including the Fourth Standard, I am pleased to note a gratifying improvement in the accuracy of the work in arithmetic. The weakness in notation which was so prevalent is fast disappearing, and the slow habit of finger-counting has almost everywhere been driven out by a more general use of the ball-frame, and the introduction of regular and frequent practice in the "tables." The poorest results in arithmetic were got from the Fifth Standard; while the Sixth Standard papers, though rather better, were frequently no more than passable. In these classes, however, in the two largest schools the black mark in arithmetic was recorded in the schedules against a very small percentage of the pupils. There, and wherever else high results are obtained, good teaching alone is not relied on; all through the year the stage of progress is gauged by test examinations, the intervals between the examinations being lessened as the yearly reckoning draws near. The pupils who are really able for their work thus gain confidence in themselves which does not desert them on the day of examination; and for accuracy, rapidity, and neatness, the papers sent in on that day are nearly as good as any they have done at their "trials." That there should be teachers who go on for month after month without saving time by losing a day at stated intervals for these test examinations is almost beyond belief, but there are such, both in large and in small schools. If they would adopt a plan of procedure which the most competent teachers find indispensable, they would be less surprised at the results they obtain, and have less occasion for seeking ridiculous excuses for their continued want of success.

GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION.—In the majority of our schools the Third Standard pupils had little difficulty in distinguishing the nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adjectives in the sentences submitted to them, and failures in grammar were therefore much less common in this class than formerly. To give the "why" for every part of speech still proves the great stumbling-block to the Fourth Standard, but, as this is the essential part in telling the parts of speech, the consequence of not knowing it was disastrous to a great many pupils. The parsing of Standards V. and VI. was marked by accuracy and precision in only a very few schools. If the children were earlier taught to make a simple analysis of each sentence before they attempt to parse the words in it, many difficulties would be removed, and the value of this part of the grammar lesson as a mental discipline would be enhanced. Analysis of sentences was generally much better done than parsing. There is a danger of some of our teachers treating this exercise as an end in itself, whereas its value mainly consists in enabling the scholar to get a better understanding of what he reads, and in directing his attention to the ways in which sentences are constructed. When this is recognised the teacher will find it a valuable aid to the training of his scholars in the art of sentence-making or composition. Every one knows how hard it is to get children of average ability to write clearly and correctly on subjects with which they are quite familiar; but after making due allowance for all the difficulties to be overcome we might fairly expect the exercises in composition to be of higher merit than they usually are. Instruction in composition commences as soon as a child passes the Second Standard. If this is continued throughout the school course, and if suitable and sufficient practice is given along with the instruction, by the time he leaves school every scholar should have acquired a fair degree of skill in this art. So far such attainment is very rarely met with.

GEOGRAPHY.—In Standards IV., V., and VI., in which geography is a pass subject, the pupils in the majority of the schools easily secured a pass. To make sure that the preparation had covered all the ground to be got over in each standard, oral examination was mainly relied on. Memory-maps were done on paper, and in the highest two standards a few questions were also given to be answered in writing. The maps were often very well done. The answering of the Sixth Standard pupils was generally accurate and full, but that of the Fifth was too often confined to the mere naming of places and their positions. As a class subject in Standards II. and IV. I found the results of the teaching of geography quite satisfactory in the great majority of the schools. A great deal might still be done by the teachers to make the lessons more interesting. For this purpose illus-