

As to history, I should like to see the subject treated more as a reading-lesson, though we have yet to find the books which succeed in making it really interesting to children. With reference to the events and dates required by the regulations, there is an inclination to treat them too briefly—to convey to the scholars the bare matter of fact without any attempt at enlargement. Whatever excellence may exist in the books used, the greater part of the information conveyed must come from the well-stored memory of the teacher, who, to become a really good teacher of English history, must be a diligent student of not that only, but collateral history also.

I made this time considerable changes in the mode of conducting the examination. To prevent the expense of printing cards, the questions in all subjects were placed on the blackboard; and I am disposed to continue this plan for all subjects excepting arithmetic. The questions in the latter subject occupy so much room that the blackboard accommodation is generally insufficient, and consequently time is lost in the process.

The arithmetic work was done on slate by all classes, and corrected in the school. The principal recommendation for this is that teachers are able to overlook the work of their scholars, and take a part with the Inspector in the correction. The remainder of the examination was conducted orally, the only portion done on paper being the composition of all classes, part of the grammar of Standard IV., the analysis of Standards V. and VI., part of the geography for Standard III., and maps for Standards IV., V., and VI.; also transcription of all classes.

I believe that the extension of the system of oral examination will have a beneficial influence upon the work of the schools. As compared with the practice of using examination-cards containing a limited number of questions, oral questioning allows a much wider range to the examiner, and a much better chance of judging the extent to which a class may have benefited by the instruction given. It also furnishes a better test of the quality of that instruction.

The chief difficulty experienced arose from diffidence on the part of the scholars in giving expression to their knowledge, but this may be expected to quickly disappear, particularly if teachers take the hint to resort less to written work, and make their lessons brisk, lively, and interesting. Teachers may help greatly in this matter also by refusing to accept fragmentary answers.

Composition in the majority of schools shows decided improvement, though in some cases very serious defects still exist.

I did not attempt to adapt the subjects upon which the scholars were required to write to the work done in the schools during the year, but I took care to mention subjects only with which children may be supposed to have some familiarity, and I gave a choice of subjects. Generally speaking, the result is satisfactory. The writing is good, punctuation receives attention, and the mode of expression, considering the age of the writers, leaves little to be desired. In the best schools there is an absence of uniformity in the wording, which shows the teaching to have been something better than mechanical.

The defects most apparent, and which are intensified in those schools which do not come up to the general standard, are negligence in writing, disregard of punctuation and the proper use of capital letters, a lavish use of capitals, becoming sometimes quite ludicrous, and obscure and cumbrous sentences and paragraphs. It may safely be said that, where these defects co-exist to any great extent, the teaching has been not only ineffectively but carelessly performed. In this subject the use of abstract topics should be carefully avoided.

In correction of composition exercises specimens of the best and the worst should be read to the class, and the scholar's co-operation demanded in their correction and improvement. If this were regularly and systematically done the blemishes I have referred to would quickly disappear.

Grammar is generally a fairly strong subject. Standard III. does very well in picking out parts of speech from reading-book.

The parsing of Standard IV. is generally equal to the work of Standard V., but oral questioning on the inflections of noun, pronoun, and adjective revealed some deficiencies.

The work of Standards V. and VI. deserves praise, but in analysis in some cases a departure from the most straightforward arrangement of the parts of a sentence caused disaster.

The manner in which the concession made in the new regulation with reference to grammar is used by the teacher will furnish a test of his diligence and zeal. There may be a few who would regard the alteration as an inducement to relaxation of effort. The great majority, I am sure, will welcome it as leaving them at greater liberty as to method of teaching. The tendency should be to render the teaching less mechanical.

The alteration in programme for geography, while fixing the work more definitely in some classes and curtailing the work in others, offers more inducement for variety of treatment on the part of the teacher.

There is more encouragement to go outside of merely political geography, and to teach something of natural productions, trade, manufactures, forms of government, &c. There are indications that the opportunity will not be disregarded, for the subject shows evident symptoms of improvement as compared with any previous year. Physical geography is taught as well as can be expected with such a deficiency of apparatus. Maps are generally well executed, and show good knowledge of location. Some schools show that Standard III. can be taught to spell geographical names correctly, while others would appear to regard the matter as hopeless.

Reading generally is fluent and distinctly articulated. The difficulty with emphasis is not so much its omission as its use in the wrong place. With reference to the intelligent comprehension of the subject-matter, there is room for improvement. In questioning as to the meanings of words, difficulty of expression is no doubt answerable sometimes for an apparent want of knowledge. There is a perceptible necessity for thorough drill in this work, and the various uses and applications of the same word should be pointed out. I have before suggested that encouragement should be given to the use of dictionaries. Those used by the upper classes should give examples of variety