

of teachers, greatly encourage this. The "Zealandia" geography books avoid this fault, and are much more suitable for ordinary use. At Te Aroha and one or two other schools, where a full and intelligent knowledge of the subject was shown, no text-book had been used. Many pupils answer badly from mere want of training to answer in writing. The quality of much of the instruction may be not unfairly judged from the answer to the following question set in the work of Standard IV.: "Tell what you know of the country and the people of Arabia?" The answer for the most part consisted of these words—"Arabia, capital Mecca near the Red Sea." I should be glad to think that the inferior answers given to such a question as this were due to the incomprehensibility of the question rather than to the scanty knowledge of the pupils.

On the head of history I give Mr. Dickinson's remarks in full. "History is one of the least satisfactory subjects in our school course. The knowledge of the pupils is very meagre. I am afraid this is due to the want (a) of ample and accurate knowledge on the part of our teachers, and (b) of the power of describing and narrating orally."

My own views on the teaching of history in elementary schools should be well known, as I have publicly advocated them for years. I think it should not be a subject of examination at all, and that the reading, in each of the classes from Standards III. to VI., of a suitable historical reader or text-book, as part of the course of instruction in reading and English, would be sufficient to give our pupils an acquaintance in outline with the great features in the story of our fatherland. This arrangement would, I believe, foster an interest in biographical and historical reading, and avoid the danger, by no means imaginary, of creating a dislike of what might in later years be an interesting and instructive study. To have to prepare for an examination in such a subject as history, which the young can only imperfectly understand, and understand all the worse for the necessarily concise treatment it must receive in a school-book, is not the best way of investing it with interest. No change in the school course seems to me so desirable as this, or better calculated to relieve teachers and pupils of some part of the too heavy burden now imposed on them.

Of object-lessons Mr. Dickinson writes: "This subject is being treated more intelligently. The topics chosen deal more frequently than formerly with the ordinary phenomena of common life, and with objects familiar to the children. Thus the scholar is now being led to acquire knowledge by observation and experiment." And he adds, "The science-lessons are not quite so satisfactory in too many of the small schools. The teaching is not sufficiently accurate or sufficiently grounded on observation and experiment. Expensive apparatus is not needed." The improved treatment of object-lessons here noted is, I think, fairly general. A wider knowledge of the methods and aims of the lessons in recent books on this subject would help to make the improvement more general. As to science, little time can be spared for lessons in it. No great result either in training or in knowledge can be looked for unless more than one hour a week can be given to the subject. In a few large schools this allowance of time has been somewhat exceeded, but in most schools it is less, and is frequently only half an hour. In a fair number of cases creditable work has notwithstanding been done, and several head teachers could be named who have taken the subject up with enthusiasm and success, and treated it on truly experimental lines. In laws of health, simple physiology, and agricultural science the teaching is of necessity largely "book science," but an appreciable deposit of permanent knowledge is frequently secured even on these terms. Except in agricultural science and simple chemistry we have no easy text-books that fit into the programme of science teaching, and this is one of the chief causes of the somewhat unsatisfactory condition of the instruction. The programme itself is in need of revision, while the agricultural science course is so comprehensive that it has been prescribed verbatim for the teacher's certificate examination. The inaccuracy of the instruction, to which Mr. Dickinson refers, is a very real defect that can be removed only by teachers informing themselves better on the subjects taught. If we could get rid of history as an examination subject science could be much more worthily treated than it now is.

Oral answers are being more generally stated in the form of complete sentences, and this should be aimed at everywhere. But they too often want the fullness and definiteness that constitute the chief merit of a good oral answer. Many pupils seem to say not as much as they can, but as little as they can, on the subject of the question. This is largely owing to the undue prevalence of narrow questions that deal with a single isolated point. Object-lessons, science-lessons, history-lessons, and examinations on the matter of English lessons afford scope for a wide and comprehensive style of questioning, and furnish ample material for a good training in oral composition. Indeed, there is hardly a subject in the school course that might not be turned to good account for this purpose.

Only in a very few schools is the order of the pupils other than satisfactory, and it is usually good. My colleagues for the most part speak favourably of the attention also, but in a good many of the larger classes that have come under my notice I do not think the attention satisfactory, except in the higher standards. Many of our teachers have a very humble idea of what good attention should mean, and are satisfied if their classes show a quiet and decorous mental torpor. If it is reasonable to expect evidence that an earnest and willing spirit of work pervades a class; that every pupil is carefully and closely noticing all that is being done; that the eyes of all are following word by word the reading of one; that the ears of all are open to the teacher's instruction and to their class-fellows' answers—if it is reasonable to expect all this, the number of well-managed classes in the larger schools is much lower than I could wish it to be. In the smaller schools the attention is usually much better.

Low answering has been about as prevalent as in previous years. This evil involves great loss of efficiency in many schools.

Changes of teachers and absence on leave have been perhaps less frequent than heretofore, but they still form one of the greatest obstacles to progress. It is most important that assistants of good physique should be appointed in the larger schools, as the skilled head masters of these establishments have now to act as relieving teachers during a considerable part of the year, and are thus hindered in the systematic supervision of the teaching and management of the pupil-teachers and