

In the composition test the children had the option of writing the story suggested by a picture placed before them, or a short letter or an essay on one of twenty-five prepared subjects. Teachers have felt hampered by the necessity of preparing a certain number of subjects, and they and we have been frequently disappointed with the compositions written on these subjects. We are, on the whole, satisfied with the compositions on pictures. We shall again use these, but shall give the option of a paraphrase or of a subject which is familiar to the children. The instruction to prepare twenty-five subjects is therefore withdrawn. For the first time we tested the senior classes in synthesis and transposition of constructions. Though this useful class of work was first prescribed by the Department of Education in 1894, the results of our examination disclosed considerable weakness in it in the majority of schools. Examples of faulty syntax were given for correction, but comparatively few of the children were able to deal intelligently with them. In the case of the majority of the children taught in our schools the rules of syntax should receive greater attention than they appear to have been receiving.

The teaching of geography steadily improves. In the better schools the geographical features within sight of the school are closely observed for the purpose of helping the pupil in painting his mental pictures of distant regions. Diagrams, pictures, even magic-lantern slides, as well as maps, help in the work. We have been frequently gratified by the realism of even Standard II. geography. In testing geography we have frequently given the option of writing a description or of drawing a map or a diagram, and in most cases the latter has surpassed the former. In some cases the children, without suggestion in the questions, have illustrated an answer by a small rough sketch—half a minute's work nearly doubled the value of the answer. Teachers are wisely treating the text-book as only the complement of the map. In the study of a country the rapid drawing of the rough outline forms, in many schools, the first part of each lesson; the physical features—water-partings, rivers, lakes, &c.—are boldly sketched in; climate resources and commercial advantages are next dealt with; then follows naturally the location of the people in the various industrial centres. By work such as this is created a mental picture of a country which will prove a permanent possession of the child, ready for reproduction at the suggestion of any of the features associated in its creation. But geographical facts and names thus taught must be secured by the ordinary memorising process. Physical and mathematical geography are not so well taught as commercial and political.

We direct the attention of teachers to an injustice to which children coming from another school shortly before the examination are liable. If the geography they have studied is not that of the standard they join, the Inspector's attention should be called to the circumstance, and he will examine them in the geography studied in the school from which they came.

We have in many cases been dissatisfied with the appearance made by the classes in history. This dissatisfaction is due in part to the text-book in use in our schools, but in part to the treatment of the subject—there has been too much memorising and too little teaching. The history text-book recently prescribed by the Board contains about one-third of the amount of reading-matter in the book it supersedes. The time saved in reading should be devoted to teaching the subject. There is not now the slightest excuse for spending the school-hours in writing to dictation the teacher's notes and afterwards committing them to memory with or without understanding. In Standard IV. the story might be told by the teacher with the aid of blackboard and map illustration, then read by the pupils from the text-book, then perhaps used by them in whole or in part as the subject-matter of a composition exercise. In Standards V. and VI. the reading might be taken on one day, and explanation, illustration, and examination on another, these exercises being of such a character as to encourage a little extended reading and research at home. This might well be the character of the preparation for scholarship competition. The dates and topics contained in the prescribed text-book will suffice for the Junior Scholarship examination; but the treatment of the topics will require considerable elaboration.

Needlework is one of the best taught subjects in the schools. Knitting, though not compulsory, is frequently presented, and is generally of very good quality. Cutting-out and fitting might be more largely practised. When cloth cannot be procured for this purpose paper should be used. The work prescribed for Standard VI. has been rather neglected, and work not prescribed allowed to take its place. In the future Standard VI. girls will receive the benefit of the 10-per-cent. reduction on account of needlework only when the prescribed work has been presented.

The following table summarises the examination results of the Catholic schools in the pass-subjects:—

TABLE III.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age.
Above Standard VI. ... ..	2	...	...	Yrs. mos.
Standard VI. ... ..	35	33	29	14 11
" V. ... ..	43	39	34	14 1
" IV. ... ..	87	78	68	13 4
" III. ... ..	123	113	87	11 11
" II. ... ..	122	116	105	10 0
" I. ... ..	97	88	85	8 9
Preparatory ... ..	278	...	...	...
Totals ... ..	787	467	408	12 2*

\* Mean of average ages.