

furnished by the school referred to, where only nineteen passed out of sixty-seven examined, whilst in Standard V. every one of the sixteen presented failed to gain half marks, and eleven of them failed to work a single sum correctly. Geography, though slightly improved, is still far from satisfactory. By the new regulations the subject is now placed amongst the class-subjects in all standards excepting the Sixth.

Composition.—The falling off in this subject is chiefly due to the Fourth and Fifth Standards. In the latter, the attempts to paraphrase a passage of poetry, taken from the reading-books in use, were frequently very disappointing, and appeared to indicate insufficient practice in this useful exercise. In view of the fact that the ability to write a good business letter, or to express their own ideas on simple subjects in a clear and concise manner, is, or should be, one of the most important ends to be aimed at in the teaching of all classes of children, it is imperative that as much time and attention as possible should be devoted to this branch of school work. A recognised authority on education says, "The true discipline in correct speech is to be found in the practice of composition, which should begin from the first." It is to the too common neglect to notice and correct grammatical errors in oral, as well as in written replies to questions put to scholars in the lower standards, that much of the prevailing weakness in the composition of the upper classes is to a great extent due.

CLASS-SUBJECTS.

Elementary science, as taught in this district—that is, without the aid of any apparatus or appliances whatever—is, in my opinion, little better than a waste of time, which (as the results in other subjects show) can be ill afforded. It is merely memory work, and has little or no educative value. It would be far more profitable to substitute some branch of manual or technical instruction, which in this district is at present "conspicuous by its absence."

Object-lessons without objects are relatively on about the same footing as science without experiment. A few of the schools are furnished with object-lesson cards and natural history diagrams, and some more of these last have been obtained, and are being now supplied to the schools that have hitherto been without them.

Vocal music was presented at four schools only, and drill at seven. As so many of our schools are under the charge of women teachers the latter fact cannot cause much surprise, but singing might be introduced in many more schools, and that without any loss (of consequence) to the other subjects. I cannot bring myself to condemn the teachers of small schools for the omission of these additional subjects if they produce (as many of them do) satisfactory work in most of the other subjects. Perhaps the relief afforded to teachers with regard to the classification and examination of their scholars may induce such of them as have not yet done so, and who possess the necessary ability themselves, to try the effect of this enlivening and humanising subject upon the school work generally, and they will certainly find that nothing will be lost by so doing.

In the infant department of the Blenheim School, and in several of the country schools, some very creditable kindergarten work has been accomplished, and that, too, in the face of the difficulties arising from the want of the special furniture and appliances necessary for the proper and complete development of the system. The attempt has, in my opinion, been highly beneficial, especially in country schools with only one teacher, where the dull monotony and listlessness which almost inevitably oppressed the preparatory classes have been much relieved by the introduction of interesting and amusing occupations of acknowledged educative value.

THE NEW REGULATIONS.

These regulations are partly the outcome of the Education Conference held last July, and seems to call for some remarks in a report of this kind. The most important change made is that which gives head teachers the power to classify their scholars, not according to a rigid rule, but so as to suit their varying capacities. In judicious hands there can be no doubt that this will prove eminently advantageous to the scholars themselves, though adding materially to the difficulties and responsibilities of the teachers. The privilege thus granted to them also removes one of the most generally recognised faults of a standard system—*i.e.*, the vain attempt to force all varieties and degrees of mental calibre through precisely the same rigid groove in the same time—a feat which, if ever accomplished, can only be by means of a process which has been stamped with the obnoxious epithet of "cram," a much misused term, however, when indiscriminately applied to the work of all our teachers. Another most important change, and one that will perhaps give rise to much trouble and annoyance to a certain class of teachers in some localities, is that which confers upon them the power of examining for a pass all the standards except the sixth. If the teacher is thoroughly conscientious in the performance of this duty he will inevitably give offence to that numerous class of parents who believe that their own geese are swans of the most resplendent plumage, and are quite impervious to any argument based on a deficiency of intellect in their offspring. I have known cases where the parents of children afflicted with a weakness of intellect amounting almost to idiocy have loudly condemned the teacher for partiality, or even for incompetency, because the said children failed when the rest of the class passed. Hitherto the teacher has possessed an invaluable panacea for such complaints in the power (not, however, very frequently exercised) of attributing the failures of his scholars to the overstrictness of the examination, and has thus shared the burthen with if he has not transferred it entirely to the shoulders of the Inspector. As regards the thoroughness of the examinations under the new conditions, if I am to judge by my experience of the examinations of Standards I. and II. by the teachers during the past few years, I can have no misgivings. The tests employed by the teachers in the examinations of these two standards have in all cases fully equalled, and in many far exceeded, in difficulty, those that I should have placed before the same classes; and, as I propose to require the tests set in all classes to be presented to me, any weakness in this direction would