

who remain at school after passing Standard V. ever enter upon the study of a type of sentence they have for years been using in their spoken and written speech. The most useful as well as the most educative side of grammar is its constructive side; yet this department of work is entirely ignored in the prescribed grammar course. No wonder teachers complain that the grammar prescribed for the classes is useless for purposes of composition. The truth is that to be useful grammar must be practical, and to be practical it must deal largely with the forms of the child's every-day speech. Except the definition of composition for Standard IV., there is not in the syllabus one word that recognises this simple condition. It is this ignoring of the proper function of grammar that has brought upon the subject so much condemnatory criticism. Fortunately, a large number of Otago teachers, while doing the prescribed grammar, adopt a more rational treatment of it than that suggested by the syllabus.

Of the many thousand composition exercises we read during the year, a fair proportion were of high merit; but the quality of the majority of them ranged from fair to satisfactory. Year by year errors in concord and government are becoming fewer; but errors in placement of qualifying phrases and clauses and in sentence connexion are still very common. The department of syntax that deals with the function and distribution of adjuncts and with the connexion of sentences is of great importance in composition, and is deserving of much more thorough study than it has yet received in our schools. The paraphrase was generally poorly done.

Though the efficiency mark gained in arithmetic is not high, the teaching of the subject is generally good. It would be of considerable advantage to many children to receive less teaching. Things are made too easy for them; too much is explained; too little is left to their ingenuity and personal application. More frequent practice in long tots would undoubtedly raise the standard of accuracy and rapidity in computation. In future a portion of each class will be examined orally at the blackboard. How? and why? will be much in evidence in this part of the examination.

We do not see much live teaching in geography. The subject being now a class subject in all the classes but Standard VI. we hope to see improvement in the treatment of it.

There is nothing alarming in the lower efficiency mark for needlework. This important department of school work continues to reflect the highest credit upon the female teachers. The decline in the mark is no doubt owing to the change in the syllabus of work.

The singing of the large schools is generally good, often very good. The low efficiency mark is due to the poor singing of many country schools. We recommend more attention to voice training and expression.

Drill is often very good; it is also often very slovenly. In quite a large number of schools the children are made to sit at attention with their arms folded across the chest. This pernicious practice we have frequently condemned.

There is improvement in the methods of giving object and science lessons. One of the chief aims of instruction in nature-knowledge is to excite in children interest in the things and phenomena of the district in which they live. The exposed rocks, the water-worn stones, the hills, the valleys, the streams, the wild flowers, the insects, the birds, all contribute material for interesting and profitable study. The teacher who can read the book of nature does not need to go far afield for subjects, nor does he need a lot of expensive apparatus.

We are seldom satisfied with the treatment of the elements of agricultural knowledge. What is learnt is for the most part learnt from text-books, and rouses no interest in rural life and occupations. The department's syllabus is in the main an excellent one; and, though it involves some knowledge of all the sciences, it involves little that cannot be learnt by observation and easy experimentation. Plants and insects abound. Why not examine them instead of pictures of them? The soil is always present, and its mechanical, but not its chemical, analysis is easy to any one. How it is formed stares us in the face everywhere. Why restrict the work to the text-book when the book of nature lies open to the reading eye? There is the soil of the school ground; why not experiment with it, instead of learning from the text-book what will happen if we do so-and-so? We have only to plant a few beans or other seeds, and examine them at suitable intervals to see all the phenomena of germination, and only to put a spray of green leaves into a tumbler of water, invert the tumbler in a shallow dish, and put it in the sunlight to see part of the phenomena of respiration; and so on with scores of other things prescribed for study by the department. Why not see for ourselves instead of learning about what others have seen? What we have to do is, not to teach farming, which we are wholly unfitted to do, but to rouse in children keen interest in and love for all kinds of rural life and work, to generate in them habits of accurate observation, and to lead them to such first-hand knowledge of Dame Nature and her wonderful ways as shall enable them, when they enter upon the practice of farming, not only to press her into their service, but also to find

Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

We are, &c.,

P. GOYEN, W. S. FITZGERALD, C. R. RICHARDSON, C. R. BOSSENCE,	}	Inspectors.
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The Chairman, Education Board, Otago.