

matical geography. It is too often taken for granted that, if the pupils know by rote the scrappy notes in their text-books, they know all that is knowable of the subject. But just here is found one of the steps of a pupil's progress at which the teacher could with advantage go beyond the beggarly elements and put him in the way of thinking for himself. For pupils beginning to think about physical geography there is but one right starting-point, and that is in their own homes—a precept this more honoured in the breach than the observance.

The teaching of English grammar is in a most unsatisfactory condition in a great many of our schools. Judged by Inspectors' reports the subject appears to fare little better in other districts. In all but the best schools here the study of formal grammar is virtually abandoned. Where analysis, sentence structure, and correct forms of expression are studied we do not greatly complain, but when, as happens in not a few schools, neither the one side nor the other of the subject is taken up we are forced to the conclusion that there is something wrong either with the subject or with the teachers. It is high time that some definite scheme of instruction, such as that proposed at the Inspectors' Conference over twelve months ago, were put into the hands of the teachers.

In a great many of our schools history fares indifferently. We are by no means sure that the method of treatment prescribed by the syllabus is conducive to the mental growth of the pupils; indeed, we are sure that it is not. The story method is all very well for beginners, but for upper classes it appears to us to make impossible much of the teaching that gives an introduction to the study of history any claim to appear in a primary-school curriculum. History through the medium of reading-books would be in every respect preferable to history through the medium of indifferently digested notes.

As to elementary science, the less said the better. Where there are material and apparatus good work may be done. Where there is neither time spent over the subject is merely wasted. There is a splendid opportunity for the Department to rescue this subject from total inanity by supplying each unsupplied school with the minimum of apparatus needful for instruction of young people in the first steps of scientific knowledge. Teachers might themselves do much to make good the deficiency, but they will not. By-and-by, when the teacher becomes a handy man as well as a learned man, we shall have more effort in this direction. As it is we find even such a subject as agricultural science taught without a single specimen for the purpose of illustration, though the necessary material might perhaps be found no further away than the school door. The infinitesimal text-book is the source and font from which information filters through the teacher's mind into that of the pupil, where, in most cases, it is anything but a desirable possession. An excellent little pamphlet on French methods of teaching agriculture was issued by the Department some time ago, but we cannot say that the methods there suggested have been consistently carried out at any of our schools.

Making mention of the additional subjects, we may say that the fashion in school songs appears to be changing, not always for the better, we think. The ideal school song is such that its words and music will be cherished for a lifetime, and that can only be where the former are literature and the latter worthily wed to the former. As examples we cite at random "Tom Bowling," "The Minstrel Boy," "Auld Lang Syne," and "Duncan Gray." We should greatly like to see more attention paid to musical theory and elementary voice-training. There are certain very important secondary results flowing from an efficient training in singing. It is our experience, for instance, that good reading, good recitation, and good singing go hand-in-hand. Then, there is the enrichment of the pupil's mind consequent upon the development of the sense of hearing, not to mention the hygienic consideration of increased lung-capacity.

We may perhaps sum up the result of our observations on the actual working of the schools thus: In the greater number thorough and educative work is being done. In a small but unhappily increasing number there is a tendency for the work to become neither thorough nor educative. We do not altogether blame the teachers; for, in the first place, the regulations bearing upon the promotion of pupils tend to discount the quality of thoroughness, and, in the second place, the syllabus is overloaded to such an extent that educative teaching becomes well-nigh impossible. In the long run it is quality that tells, but from the very conditions laid down by the present syllabus the quantitative aspect of a child's schooling must be the overmastering idea in the teacher's mind. Various remedies have been suggested. One which has much to commend it is that pupils should be thoroughly grounded in the essentials before being allowed to take up side subjects. There can be no doubt that the endeavour to ground pupils in the essentials and at the same time to add a varied assortment of ornamentals, though having about it an air of liberality, is mere pretence, and cannot but end in disaster. Less radical, but in some measure effective, is the proposal to curtail the requirements in certain subjects; and the further proposal to limit the number of class-subjects required according to the staff and circumstances of a school. It appears to be futile to suggest any saving of time by reform in spelling and arithmetic. Anglo-Saxon Conservatism is apparently not yet willing to abandon the mysteriousness and crookedness of its native-born methods of calculation in favour of the simplicity and symmetry of the metric system, even though the abandonment would save little Celts and Saxons many tears, some stripes, and perhaps a year of precious time.

As teachers and as Inspectors we cannot forget that there are certain general principles underlying the work of teaching, and that in times of transition and of difficulty it is proper to appeal to them for guidance. Because it has direct bearing on much that has been said, we refer here to the principle known as the correlation of studies, which is, or should be, operative throughout the whole realm of educational work. In this connection the merits and demerits of what is known as teaching by subjects are being greatly canvassed by educationists at the present time. It is said, on the one hand, that the elevation of any given subjects on to separate pedestals, so that they may be separately taught, examined, and reported on, is a