

of them can be repeated, though the reluctance to look at a figure when giving its definition points to an effort of the memory rather than of the understanding. The model-drawing at the pupil-teachers' examination is in general poorly done, and some of the attempts are ludicrous.

Very fair progress is being made in the teaching of composition. Of all the subjects taught in the elementary school this taxes the teacher's resources most heavily, and it is the one in which the Inspectors find it most difficult to give helpful advice, and in which text-books give the least assistance. A great deal of very satisfactory work was met with in the large schools, and creditable exercises were received with more or less frequency in schools of all classes. Grammatical accuracy and a proper division of sentences are now very generally attained, and there has been distinct improvement in the fullness and methodical arrangement of the matter. Too many teachers are satisfied if their pupils get the minimum amount of matter that will pass muster, and do not sufficiently urge them to write out as much as they can. It is in Standard IV. that the work is weakest. The heads supplied as aids in finding subject-matter are often poorly used, the pupils being allowed to make a single sentence about each head, a practice that involves a want of coherence and of proportion in the prominence given to points of trifling and of great importance. Where heads are given, the pupils should be carefully trained to deal with them properly, so as to produce a sequence or series of sentences varying in length and complexity, and exhibiting a proper and sufficient use of relative pronouns and of subordinating conjunctions (practically other conjunctions than "and" and "but"). Much of this could and should be quickly practised orally—a feature in the teaching that one rarely sees adequately used. In particular, the fault of using parts of the verb "to be" as the usual stating word in the sentence should be discouraged, and classes should have practice in finding other stating words as substitutes for the "copula + adjective" predicate. Early in the training of Standard IV. might come practice in reproducing short pointed stories. After this the writing of narratives and descriptions suggested by pictures, such as we find in Nelson's "First Illustrated Composition Book," would be found most helpful. In Standards V. and VI. the defects of the composition exercises are much more due to poverty of thought and a meagre vocabulary than to grammatical inaccuracy or inability to arrange the matter forthcoming into sentences and paragraphs. The remedy for these defects seems to me to lie not so much in special lessons in composition, though these are, of course, most necessary and important, as in constantly fostering the habit of clear and orderly thought, and in enlarging the working vocabulary by a more thorough and intelligent literary study of the prose-reading lessons in Standards V. and VI. This is a matter in which the teachers of this district as a body have hardly risen to their opportunities. The mere teaching to read, largely by imitation and sometimes by a deadening simultaneous drill, and to explain single words—which has hitherto absorbed so much of their attention and effort—is little more than the foundation on which intelligent literary training rests. The propriety of the arrangement of the matter in sentences and in paragraphs, the transitions from topic to topic, the order and development of the leading trains of thought, the force and fitness of figurative language and inversions of order, the varying senses of the same words in different connections—these and the like are the matters that literary study notes and considers. These aspects of the prose lessons, considered as examples of literary work, should be systematically brought out, and used to develop habits of thinking by training the pupils to understand and follow out the orderly and clearly expressed thoughts of others. I know from experience that much of what I am describing can be done in the higher classes of the elementary school, but it cannot be done unless the mechanical difficulties of reading are fairly well conquered in the Fourth Standard class, and it is only since the new reading-books came into use that this much-wished consummation can be achieved. Teachers who may be unable to embark on this high course of study can give the like discipline in a more modest way by training their pupils to give, in their own words, the gist or purport of whole paragraphs or other long portions of the prose lessons read. Practice in exercises of this kind might fitly form the close of most prose-reading lessons in the two highest classes. In South Australia this exercise is specially enjoined on teachers of the higher classes, for the good training in language that it gives. Practice in oral composition of a useful kind is to be had in connection with other lessons—science, history, object-lessons, &c.; but the literary study of the prose-reading lessons possesses an intellectual value, and will impart a training, of a much higher order. To the latter we must mainly look for further improvement in the composition of the more advanced classes. As a rule, the paraphrasing of verses of poetry taken from the reading-books was moderately done, and it was often poor, sometimes indeed wretched. Our teachers are apt to blame the difficulty of the passages set for these poor results, but there can be little doubt that they are the natural outcome of a defective training.

Arithmetic is efficiently taught in the great bulk of our schools. In recent years the examination tests supplied by the Minister have become distinctly easier, sometimes one fears too easy, but there is little evidence that this has reacted unfavourably on the teaching. In many schools the fundamental principles of vulgar fractions are little understood and insufficiently impressed. Many children who can work out ordinary examples in the various rules of fractions quickly and accurately are unable to explain clearly how we change two-thirds to twelfths, or how we show that a half is greater than a third. In one school (Newton West) I was pleased to find regular exercises given in demonstrating the chief points by the subdivision of lines, and such teaching should form part of fraction drill in every school. I may here take opportunity to direct attention to a diagram, called "Fractions at a Glance," that appears as an advertisement at the end of Cowham's "New School Method." Teachers would do well to make a large copy of this on a sheet of brown paper to affix to the school-walls. At the recent scholarship examination the values of the fractions $\frac{2}{3}$, $\frac{5}{6}$, $\frac{5}{12}$ were readily compared by competitors by reducing the fractions to a common denominator, as the somewhat misleading phrase goes, but no explanation of the principle used that was of any value was given by a single competitor. No one thought of a second way of com-