

for the retention of such forms as "labour," "scent," "anchor," "arrive," "ache," might just as reasonably be urged for the continuance of "scituate," "horror," "chirurgion," "golph," and other orthographical curiosities long since departed. Composition is in some respects the least satisfactory subject in our syllabus. With reading it must be taken as the summation and index of the child's literary training. As such, it will be the finished product directly of the English work and indirectly of the whole school programme. In this latter connection we again draw our teachers' attention to the influence of spoken language on this most important branch of our work, for, though common usage has limited the term "composition" to written expression, it must be remembered that it includes oral expression as well. The child's dislike to essay-writing and the want of originality in ideas and their expression appear to be largely due to the voluntary or involuntary attempt to remove the essay in some way from the domain of the pupil's every-day speech. Instruction in essay-writing is too often confined to the correcting of a series of essays. Such a negative method has, of course, its value, but only when it forms the complement to systematic direct teaching. Some of the time now devoted to essay-writing might advantageously be devoted to memorising good prose selections, for here, as in other departments, the child's imitative powers may reasonably be used as an educative factor. Formal grammar practically finds no place as a separate subject in the syllabus as at present constituted, and, though we maintain that it has little or no bearing on the teaching of composition as an art, we are by no means insensible of its value both as a mental exercise and as an aid to the analytical and critical study of language; as such we shall welcome its reappearance in the syllabus in the modified form proposed by the Department. In our report of last year we dealt very fully with the matter of handwriting, and we are satisfied that the subject is receiving its fair share of attention, and that an improvement is taking place throughout the district. We welcome the advent of the *School Journal*, and trust that it will materially assist our teachers in a matter referred to by us in our last report—the question of wider reading. We feel that the journal has been the subject of some unreasonable criticism—a criticism aimed largely at its failure to do many things which cannot fairly be expected from a small monthly publication of necessity limited in form and scope. Whatever it may attempt, we feel its first duty is to provide bright and varied literary matter, more especially matter which is likely to be of importance and interest to the children of the Dominion. The addition of illustrations appears to us to be a matter of consideration if the *Journal* is to compete in interest with the ordinary school magazines and text-books. A matter not altogether unconnected with the *School Journal* is the question of the uniformity of text-books and their issue by the Department. This has been dealt with in a special report already presented to the Board.

**ARITHMETIC.**—Our estimate is practically the same as that of last year: Standards I, II, and III, good; Standard IV, satisfactory; Standards V and VI, moderate to fair. We have in previous reports expressed our opinion that, from the points of view of both utility and mental discipline, an exaggerated importance is attached to arithmetic as compared with, say, language. As Sir Oliver Lodge says, "A subject may easily be overtaught, or taught too exclusively and too laboriously." Of the twenty-four hours per week available for the whole syllabus of fourteen subjects, in many cases six hours or even more are devoted to arithmetic, and in the upper standards quite two hours of this time are taken up with long mechanical operations and problems which are beyond the mental grasp of the majority of the pupils. Methods and principles—the true education in arithmetic—are, as we have so often said before, sacrificed by the teacher to "wearisome, over-practice and iteration in examples," for the simple reason that in a written examination principles and methods are invariably subordinated to accuracy in working examples. As a matter of fact the average examination-paper in arithmetic from matriculation downwards might have been set thirty years ago, for all the encouragement given to a rational treatment of the subject. We believe that the requirements in arithmetic for the average Standard V pupil under thirteen years of age are, moreover, out of proportion to his knowledge of written and spoken language. An able educationist of long experience, speaking of the unsatisfactory treatment of this subject, says, "Outside the mechanical operations (addition and subtraction) arithmetic is only a question of interpretation of language, and hence a child's success in the study of it is largely conditioned by his knowledge of language. It is certain that a wider and a deeper study of the language and content of the reading lessons would greatly aid the child in his arithmetic." We entirely agree with this, and should like to see such a reduction in the tests for the upper standards as would enable the subject to be covered by a more reasonable and equitable allocation of the time available.

**HISTORY AND CIVICS.**—We find as a rule children receiving intelligent instruction in the ordinary duties and responsibilities of citizenship. The constitution and functions of the more important local bodies and matters connected with elementary economics are also features in the majority of the programmes of work submitted to us. With regard to history proper we are not able to express the same satisfaction. Too often the programmes are attenuated—not to say "scrappy." The regulations permit history to be taken in alternate years with Course B geography, but we do not think that the omission of a subject from the school course for a whole year is calculated to encourage its comprehensive treatment. In the teaching of no subject do the spirit and ideals of the teacher find more expression than in history, but it is no longer a compulsory subject for the teacher's certificate, and we are concerned to notice the number of young teachers who omit it from their professional course of study, for we fail to see how any one is to appreciate a subject with which he is not familiar. We find the best work done in schools in which the teachers are old-fashioned enough to attach importance to history, not as an examination subject, but as a means of inculcating in their boys and girls those feelings of patriotism and proper national pride which it is quite possible may one day prove as valuable assets to the nation as even its commercial and industrial efficiency.