

**SPELLING.**—Regarding this topic we repeat the opinion expressed in last year's report that so far as orthography is concerned the subject is very well taught. We would, however, welcome fuller evidence of familiarity with the force of prefixes and affixes, and a more general display of facility in their practical application.

**WRITING.**—In most schools this subject receives due attention, penmanship in the highest standards having reached a stage quite suited to the purposes of ordinary life, and sufficiently advanced to permit of rapid development into a style which will meet the requirements of a business career. In several schools this branch shows surprising excellence, but there are yet more than a few where the correct method of holding the pen is not duly observed, and where grotesque or harmful attitudes at the desk are still tolerated. A mistake is rather frequently made in permitting beginners to hold their pencils after a fashion which ought to be abandoned when they come to hold a pen. Why not begin at the beginning and avoid the humiliation involved in asking children to unlearn habits which school life has done its best to confirm?

**COMPOSITION.**—During recent years gratifying progress and improvement have been made in this subject. In a majority of schools its treatment is systematic and sound, the essays submitted being marked by evident appreciation of literary form and by considerable originality of thought. Where, however, the barrenness of the efforts put forth is most painfully noticeable we are inclined to ascribe the poverty of the results to two causes—first the absence of definite aim in the teacher's method, and next the pupil's lack of interest in the topics selected. As a starting-point from which a systematic method may be naturally evolved we would suggest the "conversation," the picture talk, the well-told story, and the simple but clear and intelligent expression of the chief features of the reading lesson. With these we may pave the way to the more advanced stage in which the pupils make their first efforts in written composition. With the preliminary training referred to, children will bring to this task minds "possessed of ideas to express," and will approach their work with eager confidence. The intelligent exercise of memory may be brought into play in recalling the incidents of some previous talk, the mental pictures then formed may be retouched in the written exercises, imagination may be allowed to work, and the pupils may venture to be original by adding some little ideas of their own.

In following out such a scheme correct writing and spelling of every-day words should receive attention. The selection, the preparation, and the presentment of the subject should aim at awakening the pupils' interest, and the pupils must have in their own minds definite ideas arising from their own observation and inquiry, from lessons they have read, from stories they have heard, or from suggestive questions put by the teacher. With progress in age and intelligence, originality should be cultivated and encouraged. They should be led to plan out their essays for themselves, and to expect kindly criticism from their teachers and classmates. The use of slipshod English and colloquial vulgarisms in oral answering should be prohibited, and every opportunity should be taken for the reading and study of literary gems.

**ARITHMETIC.**—The proficiency secured in arithmetic remains almost unaltered. Some improvement is found in Standard I and in the preparatory stages, as teachers come to a better understanding with regard to the preliminary work required. In Standards II and IV the subject holds its own; in Standard V the output is again disappointing; but in Standard VI the pupils as a body present work ranging from satisfactory to good. We are inclined to think that in any revision of the syllabus the distribution of the work might be improved, but meanwhile we urge the importance of dealing with principles more than with "rules" or formulæ. Experience again leads us to reaffirm our belief in the efficacy of abundant "mental" practice.

**GEOGRAPHY.**—Good progress is being made in the more modern treatment of this subject, and in most schools a considerable amount of useful work has been accomplished. The old-fashioned wordmongering system has practically disappeared, the existing experience of the pupil is drawn upon more freely in lessons given, it is becoming more fully recognised that the child's ideas of other rivers and mountains must be evolved from his knowledge of the stream in which he "paddles" and the hills which provide its waters and control its course. Where opportunities for outdoor observation are not readily at hand the sand-tray and the model in the playground furnish illustrative material of considerable value; and we hope to see more general recourse to the use of rough diagrams done in coloured chalks on brown paper, by means of which some teachers lend a good deal of realism to their explanations of remote and unfamiliar phenomena. In not a few cases it is found that, both in Course A and Course B geography, teachers have hampered themselves with programmes too comprehensive for one year's treatment. In the former course especially it is well to remember that the mode of dealing with the subject is all-important.

**DRAWING.**—The work presented under this heading varies, as in the previous year, from good to moderate. In the lower classes we would gladly see the practice of drawing small patterns less prevalent, but in the higher we note with pleasure that attempts to co-ordinate drawing with other subjects of instruction are becoming more general.

**HISTORY AND CIVIC INSTRUCTION.**—The provision made for dealing with these subjects is as liberal as can be expected, and in many schools a goodly proportion of pupils have derived substantial profit from the lessons given.

**NATURE-STUDY AND ELEMENTARY SCIENCE.**—These subjects in a special degree lend themselves to variety both of choice and treatment. In a large number of schools the topics are well chosen, and, handled as they are in a style which shows true appreciation of the purpose of science-teaching, they yield very satisfactory results. The pupils take an active part in unfolding courses of instruction; they watch with interest the experiments that are carried out, and are eager observers of phenomena on which definite conclusions may be based. Training of such a nature is of high value and is worthy of all encouragement. In some cases, however, teachers are unduly anxious to store the minds of children with mere statements of fact, and in these the real objects of a training in science are quite overlooked. Occasionally some overlapping of programmes was noticed, a higher