

for those more remote. Mr. A. A. Wedde was placed in charge, and a considerable number of teachers were enrolled. The full effect of the innovation will probably not be felt till the end of the present year. The Department has renewed the grant, so that this method of meeting the needs of uncertificated teachers may be given a fair trial. In the meantime it is of good augury that there has been a very fair increase in the number of candidates for certificates. Further on in this report will be found more detailed reference to the above classes.

*Remarks on Special Subjects.*—English : Reading is, in general, satisfactory ; seventy-three public schools were classed as efficient, thirteen passable, and six inefficient. Comprehension is still inclined to be weak, especially in those schools in which explanation is not systematically based on derivation. The *School Journal* is read and studied. Libraries have increased both in number and in size [details not printed], and as a rule the schools where ground is being broken in this direction give one the impression that the pupils possess a quicker and more lively intelligence. The latest proposals of the Department should assist greatly in developing the school library, by providing the means to place in every school some of the many tempting supplementary readers that the publishers are to-day pouring forth. These books are not intended for close study ; the child should read them for the pleasure of the story, and it is hoped thus to produce an early facility in the art of reading, which is the key to all knowledge. A child unable to proceed without stumbling, and halting to spell the words, is like a soldier encumbered with a weapon he has not learned to use. By-and-by, when he has learnt the art, he will no more consciously think of the weapon, even when he is finding it an indispensable aid to further conquests of a different and higher kind. The adoption of the Pacific Readers in the upper standards has also increased the interest of the ordinary reading-lesson by rendering the treatment less mechanical for the teacher. In senior classes reading is no longer mainly a formal study : it is the means of assisting the march and development of the child's intelligence. When the teacher clearly distinguishes the objective of "reading as an art" from that of "reading as a means" there will be less trouble with the problem of retardation in the lower classes. In the upper classes the aims of "reading as an art"—good tone, pronunciation, enunciation, use of the aspirate, &c.—should be largely met during the periods of work in oral composition and in recitation. "Literary Reading and Composition," by Lewis Marsh (Blackie and Son, 2s.), gives valuable suggestions for a correlated course, which should be very useful to teachers of smaller country schools with grouped classes.

Composition : What is the aim of this part of primary-school endeavour ? Is it not the production of an active association of ideas so that there may be a sufficient flow of thought logically, grammatically, and effectively expressed ? If there is to be anything more than useless thinning in a circle, the treatment must be based on nature-study—whether it be the natural history of a piece of literature or of any other object. Productive thought is based on the conscious observation of cause, effect, and purpose ; whatever brightens the child's faculties of observation and interpretation tends to increase his powers of composition. If we can only produce an essay of good length we shall have something that we may model logically, conventionalize grammatically, or cast into striking and attractive moulds. If, then, we have a right idea of all that the term "nature-study" includes, and use right methods, the results are likely to be far-reaching. We should then know when to be brief and concise, when to be full and explicit ; we should know what grammar is really necessary ; we should not be likely to slur or neglect that part of composition which relates to beauty of form—*e.g.*, in the production of a business letter there is a situation to be seized : it is to be studied as a natural object is studied. Thought will begin to flow in framing the answer. If the situation is fully seized the thought will sort itself into logical form. It may have to be improved grammatically and thrown into attractive or courteous form. It is then ready for use. Such training is the object of this part of primary-school endeavour. Schools, therefore, have not done efficient service in respect of composition if the essay is inadequate in length or defective in the other two respects mentioned. Most schools seem to centre their attention on the grammar ; fewer produce essays of satisfactory length, and still fewer of a good form. Exercises in analysis, placement of words and phrases, use of synonyms, &c., are really studies under the first heading—the teacher is here seeking to give to thought a logical form or to see the form in which the thought of others has been expressed in order to follow good usage and avoid bad. A proper scheme of work will arrange the exercises in progressive order.

The prevalent small error so noticeable some years ago has been greatly reduced. Punctuation should not be overlooked ; exercises are easily improvised, so that weakness should not be common. Exercises are also easily improvised showing the use of rhetorical questions, antithesis, climax, &c., and lessons in these are generally very interesting to children of Standards V and VI, who like to study the gymnastics of the mind as well as to practise those of the body. Some of the questions in the Department's card issue for Standards V and VI required pupils to explain the meaning of passages containing words of somewhat obsolete usage. Surely this is to be deprecated, seeing that children in primary schools have their hands full in learning the mastery of modern English. None of the candidates for Junior National Scholarship failed to attain the minimum in English. Fifty-three schools were efficient, twenty-seven passable, and twelve weak in spelling [details not printed]. This continues to be a relatively strong subject, but some teachers appear unable to make progress with it ; in their schools errors are frequently allowed to escape in the general work—geography, history, &c. ; where mistakes are not corrected they are virtually stated not to be errors. Some of the weakness again appeared to be due to faulty supervision of the pronunciation. The best results are attained with least expenditure of nerve force in those schools where each pupil carefully keeps in a note-book the words he himself finds difficult ; there is then no time wasted in memorizing words the pupil already knows how to spell.

Writing, both in copy-books and in general practice, improved greatly. Judged by the copy-books seventy-two schools were efficient, sixteen passable, and five weak. Twenty-one schools were specially commended for very neat general work ; ten were noted as weak. There was a considerable improvement in three large schools which had been adversely commented on in the previous year. In the weak schools pen-drill is neglected. In two or three cases the period set apart for the