

ment has been effected in the teaching of mental arithmetic, much remains to be done before this subject can be regarded as an important educational factor and an important aid to instruction in reasoning and oral expression. We urge teachers to adopt the practice of leading up to written arithmetic through related mental exercises. Oral and mental arithmetic should form part of every arithmetic lesson. Wherever a written problem is worked, pupils should be trained to make up a simple mental problem of the same type, and then to explain in concise language the various steps required in reasoning out the problem. If regular instruction is given on the above lines we feel certain that less will be heard of the pupil who is efficient at working out examples of a straightforward character but who fails to attack a problem with any degree of confidence.

In written arithmetic in the middle and senior classes, while a large proportion of the pupils show that they are receiving a thorough training not only in modern methods, but also in speed and accuracy, we find that in too many cases the work shows a lack of accuracy and logical arrangement, and a want of neatness in the setting-out. In these cases it is evident that, although the teachers may have taken great pains to explain the various processes used and the reasons underlying them, they have not sufficiently satisfied themselves that the teaching has been thoroughly assimilated. If educative results commensurate with the time spent on this subject are to be obtained it is essential that greater stress should be placed upon mechanical accuracy. The teaching of arithmetic cannot be considered successful unless the pupils are able to work with precision and reasonable speed. We desire teachers to be sparing in awarding partial marks for solutions that are inaccurate.

Geography.—The commercial side of geography is generally well attended to in our schools, but the dependence of the commercial aspect on the physical is not always so well worked out. In too many cases the elementary work in geography is not carried out in a practical manner, out-of-door lessons on such features as are visible from the playground being rather the exception than the rule, and a knowledge of the main points of the compass, with the application of this to winds, direction of currents, places in the vicinity of the school, &c., is frequently of poor quality.

In all schools a course of simple experiments should be carried out to enable pupils to understand fully the lessons in physical geography, elementary agriculture, and health. Sometimes the omission of this work of experimental science is explained by the absence of apparatus in the school. It does not require much ingenuity to procure such apparatus as is needed to show combustion, boiling and condensing of water, presence of CO_2 , and other simple phenomena, illustrations of which are necessary for an understanding of the teaching of the subjects named above. In these lessons teachers should not be satisfied with the reproduction by the pupils of the definitions often dictated by the instructor, but they should always see that the underlying principles are thoroughly understood by the pupils, who should then be asked to give in their own language a description of what they have observed. The intelligence and the memory must work together—neither should be over-taxed.

Nature-study is treated with varying degrees of success and failure. In those schools—and we are pleased to state that the number is increasing—where the teachers are enthusiastic nature-students the child is taught to realize that school is out-of-doors—in plant, and animal, and stone, in cloud, and sunset, and waterfall. But, on the other hand, the subject is too often devoid of interest and educational value; lessons are informative and not observational, and the pupils tend to become passive listeners instead of active seekers. In order to arouse in their pupils an active interest in the world of nature, teachers are advised to use field excursions to a greater extent than at present. Most of the work done in schools is connected with plant-life, but few teachers attempt to follow up the close association between this branch and the insect and animal life of the district. We are pleased to note that an increasing number of teachers are earnestly taking up the study of our native birds, and pupils are being trained to gather first-hand information of them and their habits from field observation.

Health and Temperance.—Lessons in health, temperance, and morals are, in general, receiving suitable treatment, and full advantage is taken of incidental opportunities for inculcating good habits of life and conduct. In a number of schools a slavish adherence to text-books, and the introduction of an excessive amount of physiology-teaching, tend to lessen the educative value of the work. The rules of health impressed upon children in the junior classes should be few and direct, and as little as possible encumbered with technicalities. The aim should be to establish health habits, and not merely impart bookish information about hygiene. A great deal may be done by correlation so that health habits may be illustrated in almost every lesson. The price of health is self-control in eating and drinking, in work and in play; and the child who is trained to control himself in these physical matters has learnt one of the important lessons of life.

Agricultural Instruction.—Mr. Green, Chief Agriculture Instructor, writes: "The instruction in elementary agriculture during the past year has been marked by a distinct improvement in an increased number of school-gardens, both in their appearance and also in the tangible results obtained from the working of them. Both these aspects are of vital importance from the child's point of view, inasmuch as their attainment naturally affords satisfaction and provides a powerful motive for his future efforts. Such internal stimuli are certainly too valuable to be disregarded, but at the same time it should be recognized that the school-garden provides abundant material and problems which can be utilized to advantage in contributing to the aim of the curriculum. In this relation, attention must again be drawn to the limited use in a number of schools of the many simple lines of inquiry and the theoretical basis on which their solution depends. The experimental method of solving many such problems can be used to added advantage by the careful record by the pupils of the object of such experiment, of details as to method and observations made during its progress, and of the conclusions reached as a result. This phase of the work needs more general attention in S5 and S6. Such note-making rather than note-taking will be found an effective means of focussing attention on the subject of inquiry, and also of correcting inaccuracies of impression and expression. The æsthetic aspect of the work continues to be reflected in the improvement of the school-grounds by the planting of ornamental shrubs distributed from the Training College students' garden."