

school to the employment of an additional teacher or pupil-teacher. Special provisions were also made for the employment of mistresses as sole teachers in small schools. The increase in the proportion of adult teachers in the larger schools, the expediency of which has been recognised by the Board for the past two or three years, and towards which the Board in its appointments had consequently been working as opportunities occurred, was early completed, and has proved of very great advantage. These schools have during the past year occupied a more favourable position in regard to the possibilities of efficient instruction than ever before. Only two of the schools with which I have had to do during the year come within the range of the second of the features I have mentioned, and in their case the new arrangement is only now introduced. In only one instance, as far as I am aware, has the failure to reach the average attendance provided in the new rule justified the removal of a second teacher, and in that case the person's services were retained. The district has hitherto been distinguished for the liberality with which in small schools a second adult teacher has been granted at an early stage of the growth of attendance, and even if such schools were affected to a much greater extent by the change no impairment of efficiency need ensue. Six schools were taught by females as sole teachers, probably on the whole with much greater benefit to the school districts in which they were placed than if masters had been employed.

**TIME-TABLES.**—Time-tables of fair working character, making provision for all regulation subjects, are almost invariably exhibited in the schools. In one or two instances a good time-table, procured from an external source, appears to have been provided more for the gratification of the Inspector in his periodical visits than for the guidance of school work; but at least an approximate adherence is the rule, and for the most part the criticisms I have had to make during the year concern only points of distribution, on which occasionally even some difference of opinion would be allowable. It is rarely, however, that I find side by side with the time-table an analysis showing the amount of time given to each subject weekly. Such an analysis would save an Inspector an immense amount of trouble, and for that reason I wish our teachers would always be good enough to make the addition, distinguishing carefully the time spent in direct teaching and the time spent in practice at desks, while the teacher is otherwise engaged. The distinction is essential in all but very large schools, in which the teacher is never to be "otherwise engaged;" but if one teaching period, say, of half an hour, or in arithmetic one hour, has to be broken up, as in most small schools, into partly oral and partly silent work by different sections of a group, the whole may be regarded as time of direct teaching for the group in the subject concerned.

**QUESTIONING.**—Oral teaching relies mainly on questioning, and the success of the teacher depends not only on the skill shown in the nature and direction of the questions, but on the selection of the answerer, and on the readiness with which the sequence is adapted to the exact form which the answer assumes. Yet to some teachers, despite repeated criticisms, simultaneous answering, in which it is impossible to recognise either the exact form of the answer or the distribution of the capacity to answer at all, still presents irresistible attractions. Further, where simultaneous answering is avoided—and most of our teachers do avoid it—I find very generally a most imperfect answer—not, in fact, forming a real answer, but merely giving some indication of a glimmering of knowledge or comprehension—accepted with a "Quite right" by the teacher, who then passes on to the next question or statement. Simultaneous answering utterly spoils a lesson. The other fault reduces its effectiveness, but, what is of still more importance, a grand opportunity is thus lost of training the children to express themselves clearly as well as promptly in suitable language. I look upon the latter as one of the most important duties of the teacher, and wherever any difficulty is found in oral examination of getting at the knowledge which the children possess, I am justified in concluding some radical defect in the method of teaching adopted.

**HOME EXERCISES.**—In the inspection of schools, whatever estimate of the teacher's capacity may be derived from lessons given in the presence of the Inspector, reliance must to a great extent be placed on the written work, especially on the home exercises, for evidences of continued diligence, and also, in part, of the state of school discipline. Written exercises to be worked at home are usually given in our schools, and, notwithstanding that difficulties occasionally occur in connection with them, and smouldering fires are here and there found which have a tendency to break out at times into the flame of a public discussion, I look upon the practice as a good one, certain limitations and conditions being observed. My notes tell me that one of these conditions, perfect correction, is violated with sufficient frequency to justify a general reference to the matter. Teachers say generally that time does not permit, and a cursory correction appears to be all that is made in many schools. If teachers cannot find time to examine regularly and carefully all the home exercises in person or by a deputy on their staff, such exercises had better be omitted altogether. The difficulty sometimes springs from the choice of matter unsuitable in amount or character. In character the work should be easy and definite, without, however, becoming merely mechanical, and should consist either of the reproduction of lessons already given or be such as the immediately preceding lessons have prepared the child to do without any difficulty. "The best teachers," say the Instructions to Inspectors of the English Education Department, "use such exercises rather to illustrate and fix in the memory lessons which have already been explained in school than to break new ground or to call for new mental effort."

**INFANT TEACHING.**—*Reading.*—The method most commonly employed in our schools is that of word-building, which is used by some mistresses with marked success. A beginning should probably be made on the "look and say" method by teaching with the aid of pictures a small group of words, the names of common objects, and also a few relational words so as to form a variety of little sentences. Next should come the analysis of these words so as to teach their elementary sounds, next the recognition of the letters by their names, and next abundant practice in building up words, the children supplying the materials, and the work throughout being conducted on the blackboard. The word-building may be continued indefinitely. The grouping of words will be gained by imitation and principally by suitable questioning on sentences read as the vocabulary extends. As soon as possible connected narratives should be introduced.