

*Spelling.*—Although above Standard III. the spelling of selected words is no longer used as a test, still I usually gave a few words, and, when there was any doubt about the pass in dictation, I decided on the quality of the spelling. As a rule, however, I found that the selected words were better known than the passage for dictation, and this was due, I think, to teachers giving their pupils insufficient practice in the latter.

Spelling in the district as a whole was by no means satisfactory, and even in schools where it was satisfactory in the special tests I found that in the rest of the examination work the spelling was sometimes most careless, the easiest and most familiar words being misspelled even in Standard V. and Standard VI. Composition was often utterly valueless from this cause, although in such an exercise the pupils may choose their own words, and are not under the necessity of using any word of which they are at all doubtful.

I attribute this inferiority to the poor methods of teaching which are adopted, the ear being appealed to more than the eye, and the blackboard being seldom or never used. Teachers should remember that good spelling is the result of correct visual impressions, and is not so much dependent upon impressions received by the ear. How often does even an educated man hesitate over the spelling of a word, but when he writes it down his eye at once distinguishes the correct form of the word. If teachers recognise this fundamental principle, and apply it to the work of the school, less difficulty will be found in teaching the subject. Thus all words incorrectly spelled should be written neatly on the blackboard, and the pupils required to look at and spell the words. Any errors which have to be written on slates should be set out neatly—not scribbled, as is too often the case. Transcription should be carefully corrected, and an error made in such an exercise should be considered a serious one. Whenever new or difficult words occur, no matter in what lesson, they should be written on the blackboard, explained, and recapitulated at the end of the lesson.

I believe that perfunctory and careless correction of the pupils' exercises by the teachers may be held responsible for much of the poor spelling. The transcription on slates is very frequently scarcely glanced at, and I have found as many as five errors in the transcription of not quite three lines from the reading-book of Standard II., and this after the work had been corrected. At my inspection visits an examination of the exercise-books in many cases revealed to me a state of things I should have considered impossible, and this in some of even the larger schools. In composition and dictation error after error was passed uncorrected. Incorrect sums were marked correct, and the books were very untidy and dirty. Such exercises serve only to impress erroneous ideas more firmly on the minds of the unfortunate children, and help to lay a foundation of ignorance it is extremely difficult to displace. In order that teachers might have an opportunity for finding out the weak points in their classes they were asked to mark the papers handed in at the examination, but not very often could the correction be relied upon.

*Writing.*—As I have before stated, I had frequently on my first visit to find fault with the manner in which the copy-books were kept. As I now require all books used during the year to be shown at the examination, more care is being taken.

I should like to see evidence of more careful correction and supervision of the writing, and also of more teaching, this being a subject, like reading, in which there is a tendency to allow pupils to "go on working" instead of teaching them how to do it. Writing must be taught from the lowest class, and the infants should be as careful over the "stroke" or the "right-line" as the pupils in the higher classes are over the most complex letter. When some skill in making right-lines has been acquired they should be joined by simple curves, and so on by easy gradations till all the letters are mastered. It is not sufficient that a certain mark on a slate may be recognised as intended for a particular letter, it must bear analysis and inspection, and the slope, the joinings, the loops, the heights, &c., must be made as exemplified by the system of writing in the school.

In Standards I. and II. I have received some really excellent writing on slates, and even in some of the infant classes the pupils have made the letters very well indeed. At the examinations I hope to find a high standard of excellence in Standard I. to Standard III., for in these classes the principles of the synthesis of letters and words must be thoroughly grasped if the writing in the upper classes is to be creditable.

In Standard II. the capital letters were usually weaker than the rest of the writing. I wish to point out how necessary it is for teachers to be extremely careful of the ruling on the slates of the lower classes, for bad ruling means bad writing.

In classes Standard I. to Standard VI. I have frequently found that in the same class two series of copy-books and probably two or more numbers of each series are being used. Where this is the case there can be very little effective instruction. In the same school only one series of copy-books should be used, and all pupils in any one standard should at the same lesson write the same copy. The more difficult parts of the model should be written on the blackboard, explained, and, if necessary, practised on the slates before being written in the copy-books. Any fault that is at all general should be explained on the blackboard, and not to the individual pupils. In fact, the blackboard can scarcely be too freely used.

The writing on the examination-papers was uneven in quality, in a few cases degenerating into an untidy scrawl, but, as a rule, the papers were marked by highly creditable neatness and arrangement. I think that here a special word of praise is due to the young female teachers, who in many cases have been placed in charge of small schools, for their classes often sent in papers which were marked by excellent writing, neatness, and general arrangement of work.

*Drawing.*—In this subject there was sometimes a want of organization such as was referred to under writing, two series of drawing-books being used in the same class, and the pupils all working at different places. Very little class-teaching was possible, and very little was attempted, so far as I could see. In the schools in which better organization prevailed, and where the subject was properly taught, the drawing was very satisfactory indeed, and some really excellent work was shown by pupils in Standards II. and III., the figures being accurately drawn and nicely