

books are read easily, distinctly, and with satisfactory expression. In the lower classes the reading is seldom so good, but there is a considerable number of schools in which good reading is met with in all the classes. It is mainly in the preparatory and lower-standard classes of the smaller schools that reading is inferior, and that the year's work is overtaken indifferently and with difficulty. These defects are to be traced to the bad start which beginners frequently make, sometimes to insufficient attention to the subject, and sometimes to unsatisfactory attention during the lessons. The defects themselves, however, are not so prevalent as I supposed when writing on this subject last year, and they have to a considerable extent been remedied in the interval. On the whole, the teaching of reading is but seldom unsatisfactory in the classes above Standard II., and in a great number of cases it is quite satisfactory and even creditable. In saying this I mean by "reading" the reading of the ordinary class-books in the hands of the pupils. This, indeed, is all that teachers can be held responsible for. If ability to read the ordinary class-books does not imply ability to read any other book of equal or even somewhat less difficulty, the directors of the educational system who fix the amount and the difficulty of the reading required at each stage must be held responsible. I greatly doubt if our pupils get as wide and thorough a training in reading, at each stage of their progress, as would qualify them to read easily other books of equal difficulty; but I cannot blame the teachers for this result. Their work is defined and limited by outside authority, and if they overtake it as defined they do all we can expect of them. A more thorough training can be secured only by a still more extensive course of reading, and with our weighty syllabus of instruction one does not see how that can be overtaken except in a few of the largest schools.

Récitation, which should display a higher degree of art in reading, is seldom as satisfactory as the ordinary reading of the classes. One cannot but doubt whether the artistic reading of the poems learned is carefully taught before pupils are set to commit them to memory.

Explanations of the language and the train of thought in the reading-lessons is seldom satisfactory, and the consideration of this topic demands increased attention and more skilful handling. In the suggestions submitted to the Board I have dealt with this matter in some detail. Preparatory study of the language of reading-lessons is little encouraged, and almost nowhere systematically tested.

Writing varies greatly from school to school. Success in teaching it depends quite as much on the teacher's power of control and his influence with his pupils as on good methods. On the whole it is not as well taught as it might be, though there are many schools in which it is creditably done. In a number of schools there is too little writing in copy-books, transcription without any model to imitate being used instead. The toleration of rather careless slate-writing and ciphering, and of indifferent work in exercise-books, is responsible for a good deal of the inferior writing one meets with. It is easy to lay too much stress on mere slowness of writing. Slowness is no virtue here or elsewhere, and it is not slow work that is wanted, but deliberate and careful work. Where there is really good attention, writing may be rapid and good, and it is none the less likely to be good because it is fairly rapid. When referring to this subject last year I spoke more favourably of the teaching than I can now do.

Drawing is, on the whole, better taught than writing, and is often good. In the smaller schools I should not be sorry to see some of the stress laid on this subject transferred to writing, a manual exercise of much more general utility, though of less intellectual value. The lower classes seldom draw as well as the higher ones. Here the pupils are too often allowed to use measures and rulers more than is desirable. Pupils would get a better training at the lower stages if figures with curved lines were more generally used as exercises.

The arithmetic of the preparatory classes has been referred to above. In the lower-standard classes there has been some advance in this subject both in quickness and in accuracy of working; in the higher classes, where the work is more satisfactory, there is no conspicuous change to note. Little has been done in the way of giving such pupils in Standards II. and III. as cannot add without counting on by units a ready knowledge of addition. In dealing with this difficulty many teachers show a plentiful lack of resource and perseverance. I do not think there is enough blackboard teaching of this subject in the lower standards. It is only direct oral work of this kind, and plenty of it, that can insure readiness and accuracy in using the fundamental operations. Too much time is frequently taken up in correcting answers, the time for blackboard teaching being thus seriously curtailed. When working exercises from books or set on the blackboard, pupils should usually do a good deal more than we find them accomplishing. The teaching at the blackboard of the higher classes is usually clear and intelligent, but too much help in solving questions and problems is frequently given. Here, as in explanation and other subjects, it is the work the pupils do for themselves, the original thought they bring to bear on the questions and problems, that is the educative agency, and such work should be encouraged and stimulated, with all patience, by questions studiously framed to suggest only what is indispensable. There has been some improvement in the mental arithmetic of the higher classes; in the lower it was not so satisfactory as in these.

In composition the work of Standard VI. was for the most part of very satisfactory quality, and that of Standard IV. distinctly better than last year's. In Standards V. and III. there has been but little improvement, and the results of the teaching are seldom commensurate with the liberal share of the school time that is devoted to it. Wider reading, and a more careful and intelligent study of sentence-structure and of the reading-lessons considered as specimens of composition, seem to me the most likely means of securing work in this subject at once sufficient in quantity and of satisfactory quality. A better training in oral composition in connection with questioning on object-lessons, history-lessons, and the story or matter of reading-lessons, would do much to enlarge the vocabulary and improve the composition of pupils at and below the Standard IV. stage.

The grammar of Standards III. and IV. is being taught with growing intelligence, but there is still wide scope for further improvement. In parsing words pupils can very generally give a fairly satisfactory reason for their answers when they are expressly asked for it. Only a minority of the