

One seldom sees a teacher investigate with his pupils the general thought of reading lessons, some of which, and especially the poems, invite such consideration. Elementary literary analysis should not be beyond the grasp of the older pupils, and it should certainly be applied to all poems that are committed to memory. This kind of exercise is of great value in connection with oral composition, and in developing the intelligence and taste of the older scholars.

Recitation of poetry is in general accurate, but often hurried and deficient in expression. This is mainly due to the excessive use of simultaneous recitation, an exercise that always tends to be "wooden"; indeed, all simultaneous reading and answering is prone to be tainted with this defect. Literary analysis and appreciation are often not attempted. If our aim here is to store the mind with beautiful thoughts beautifully expressed, the poems must be thoroughly learned, and the elements in which the beauty consists must be apprehended with some clearness; and this demands a careful consideration of the thoughts and their expression. Recitation should never be judged by a simultaneous test.

Spelling, within the range of the principal reading-book, is in general well taught. In many schools it absorbs a great deal of time. It should never exceed an hour and three quarters a week, and might be overtaken in an hour and a half, word-building included.

Writing now more generally bears the impress of the copy-books in use in the schools. It is seldom unsatisfactory, and is good in a large number of schools. In the smaller ones it varies considerably in quality. Writing in exercise-books is for the most part less careful than that in copybooks, and sometimes there is a discrepancy that teachers should be ashamed of. Experience shows that good writing and weak discipline are incompatibles: those who cannot account for their pupils' weak writing should ponder this. Proper pen-holding and proper writing-posture are still undervalued by many teachers.

Arithmetic is on the whole well taught below Standard IV. In the three highest standards, and more especially in Standard V., the results of the teaching are often disappointing. The work there is marred by inaccuracy and above all by want of power in dealing with the simple problems set. Only in Standard VI. have questions presenting any real difficulty been noticed. I find it hard to account for the rather backward condition into which the teaching of the higher classes in this subject has drifted; and teachers profess to be as much surprised and disappointed at the evidence of it as the Inspectors are. It looks as if many teachers did not really know what their pupils can do; but considering that their knowledge of the subject can be so readily and surely tested there is no excuse for this. Ample time is allowed for a thorough and an intelligent training in the subject. Insufficient mental and oral drill in dealing with simple problems, too exclusive practice of slate exercises often devoid of explanation of steps, and the overvaluation of mere quantity of work, are among the chief causes of the want of progress noted above. In former reports various suggestions have been offered to improve the teaching, and many might do worse than give these suggestions renewed consideration. I need add only that in a fair number of schools the upper classes have been as successfully taught as the lower, and that these are as often small schools as not.

In many cases the teaching of composition shows fair progress, and on the whole it is satisfactory. In the larger schools it is usually more than satisfactory, and is not unfrequently good. Sporadic exercises of superior quality are met with in most schools, even in these in which the average quality of the work is low, for special aptitude shows itself very markedly in this subject. In teachers' lists of composition subjects, abstract topics and others of which pupils have no direct or personal knowledge figure too prominently. The trail of the teacher, as Mr. Grierson remarks, is plainly seen in the pupils' handling of all such subjects. It is most important that pupils should have a full and in general a first-hand knowledge of the subjects on which they are asked to express their thoughts in writing. There are few districts so quiet or isolated as not to yield a considerable list of subjects satisfying this condition. The other branches of study, especially nature-study, observational geography, health and science, and suitable pictures, afford material well suited to supplement the list of local familiar topics. In a number of schools a good deal of carelessness in the correction of composition exercises has been noticed. In the large schools pupil-teachers, unless specially qualified, should not be allowed to correct and criticize this work. I am glad to find the practice of oral composition so strongly encouraged in the new syllabus. Under the name of "good oral answering" it has long received attention from the Inspectors in this district. Teachers will now probably understand more clearly the object of the training expected under this head, which has not been too successful hitherto, as it has often been thought sufficient if pupils gave their answers in a short sentence instead of a phrase or a bare word. Oral composition is naturally the handmaid of almost every other department of study in the school, and the constant occasion for its use should, under painstaking and skilful direction, make pupils much more ready and resourceful in the expression of their knowledge and thoughts in familiar language than they now are. There are few schools in which the pupils can readily state what they have learned, and even know after a fashion. The power to do this is really the only satisfactory proof that the teaching has been assimilated, and the knowledge truly gained. Systematic training in oral composition should do much to lessen the poverty of thought and the poor command of language that are the besetting faults of the inferior composition exercise. "In handling this subject it is of prime importance that a child should be trained to think about a subject so as to develop and expand it; such treatment is indispensable if we are to reach the best results" (Mr. Mulgan). It is in developing this power of thought that current teaching is weakest. Special lessons on oral composition should hardly be necessary in the two lowest classes.

For good or for ill the new syllabus has thrown out much that has been thought valuable in grammar, and has incorporated what remains in the composition course. With children who do not hail from cultured homes, definite teaching of the grammatical residuum will have to be continued, for this instruction cannot, in such cases, be adequately given incidentally in dealing with composition, though such treatment is in no way to be discouraged. I greatly regret that teachers should be advised to