

should be little need for the use of either. To invest every reading-lesson with interest should be one of the teacher's primary aims. This cannot be done unless the reading-lessons, at each stage, are well within the pupil's powers. It excludes all unnecessary re-reading of lessons that are not of special value for their matter or style. It means, above all, that great prominence shall be given to consideration of the incidents and thoughts of the lessons, and that these topics shall regularly form the subject of free conversation and discussion between pupils and teachers.

It is necessary to repeat, what I have often urged before, that a wider course of reading should be overtaken from the Infant Reader stage to the end of the Standard III stage. At least three distinct books might well be read yearly in all these classes. For all primer classes I should like to see the Royal Crown Primers and Infant Readers brought into use.

The practice of silent reading* by pupils of the higher classes has much to recommend it, and I should like to see it widely tried. For this, large classes are divided into sections, which are taken in turn for oral work, while the other sections (or section) are engaged in the silent study of suitable reading-matter, the value of their study being evidenced by their ability to answer questions on the matter and language, and to give oral outlines of the substance of the passages read. To profit by this exercise, pupils must be able to use it intelligently—*i.e.*, they must be able to follow the sense, to use a dictionary in learning the meaning and (it may be) the pronunciation of new words, and to express with some freedom, both orally and in writing, the substance of what has been read; in short, they need a sufficient training in the art of original study—the most valuable discipline the school can give. A school library is necessary for furnishing a variety of books suitable for silent reading. Many cheap short supplementary Readers are now issued by educational publishers for the various classes of elementary schools, and it would be well if these could be made available for use in this connection. Messrs. Thomas Nelson and Sons and Messrs. Blackie and Son, among others, now offer a long list of good books for school libraries at the very low prices of 6d. and 1s. a volume, and teachers would do well to consult their recent catalogues. The "School Journal" which the Department has arranged to publish will no doubt also prove of service for this purpose.

Recitation, though in general well known, is often wanting in tasteful delivery, and in the upper classes the thoughts of the passages learned might be better appreciated. Mr. Garrard considers recitation "most unsatisfactory" in the country schools he has visited, and Mr. Crowe says much the same thing. From Standard IV upwards, a careful study on literary lines should be made of every poem that is to be committed to memory, and something might be learned about the author, and the circumstances that give the poem its charm and permanent interest. This is, I am sorry to say, a stock recommendation from Inspectors that will bear further repetition. Unless the beauty and interest of a poem are brought home to the pupils' minds, learning it by heart must be a profitless and ungrateful task.

Spelling continues to be well taught, and the written exercises of the older pupils show but few errors, mostly due to haste and preoccupation with the matter of the exercise. Such errors are too often in the spelling of quite common words. "A definite and progressive scheme of word-building has been adopted only in a few schools. This arises from the want of a really well-graded and helpful textbook. Some teachers, at a very great expenditure of labour, have drawn up tentative schemes for themselves" (Mr. Purdie). Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs are issuing a helpful series of books on word-building.

The writing done as a test for the Inspectors is as a rule good, and much of it is excellent. The public outcry about the teaching of writing in the public schools, that recurs from time to time, seems to me little justified. If some of our business friends would visit a number of our public schools, and look through the exercises written for head teachers at their periodical examinations, I venture to think they would find a great deal of creditable penmanship. Rapid formed handwriting can hardly be expected of school-children; older pupils, however, should be encouraged to write more quickly even though they do not attain or keep up so high a standard of penmanship. Much of the stiffness and slowness of writing is due to faults of position and pen-holding that have been dwelt on in many recent reports.

A great deal of time is still devoted to the teaching of arithmetic, more in most schools by one hour a week than I consider desirable or necessary. To give up one-fifth of the whole school time to this one subject seems indefensible. In some schools where much time must be spent at desk-work, five hours is a less objectionable allowance. The saving from this subject of an hour a week for English studies (reading and composition) would be a great gain. In most schools the teaching of the subject is quite satisfactory, and in many it is good. The weakest work is found in the Standards II and V classes. The scope of the work prescribed for the former class is generally considered to be too extensive, and in any revision of the syllabus part of it should be transferred to the next class. On the whole the analysis of numbers up to twenty—the course covered in the primer classes—is satisfactorily done, though ready answering is now less general among all the pupils of single classes than when tables were more thoroughly learned. I am still a firm believer in learning tables thoroughly, because the difficulty in getting to know results in the four simple rules (as far as the ordinary multiplication table) is a difficulty not of intelligence or understanding, but of memory. A child may verify ten times over that nine and seven when added make up sixteen, and yet have no mastery of what he has thus got to understand. It seems childish to insist that he does not understand the result he has worked out ten times, because he does not remember it; and it is certainly wasteful of time to keep him verifying the result again and again, till it is fixed in his memory. Still, the regular and free use of counters of various kinds in working out and gaining familiarity with the results of the analysis of numbers is of the greatest value, while the manipulation of the counters and the recording of the results afford a welcome outlet

* See the English Board of Education's suggestions for the consideration of teachers, &c. (1905. Price 8d.)