

of warning is needed: as children gain a mastery over printed matter they are apt to read too rapidly, at the cost of clear enunciation. The reading lesson, and more particularly the recitation exercises, afford teachers opportunities, of which far too little is made, of forming a child's manner of speech. At the same time it is a matter for general congratulation that the barbarisms of speech heard from the adults of the preceding generation have been softened down by the influence of the schools to the slight solecisms for which our more or less competent critics profess so much horror and make so little allowance."

There are, however, a number of the smaller schools in which the teaching of reading leaves much to be desired. Inability to group the words read in appropriate phrases is now and then pointed out in the inspection reports of the year, and want of fluency and accuracy is more frequently noted. The schools here referred to are for the most part such as are subject to frequent changes of teachers. Good teachers invariably recognise that there is something seriously amiss when their pupils cannot read the current lessons with reasonable readiness and intelligence. Wherever such failure is found the causes should be investigated and remedial action taken without delay. The causes of such failure that are most in evidence are two—the neglect to give the younger pupils a proper start in reading by teaching them to read in phrases and in a natural tone from the first, and the advancing of pupils from easy books into others more or less beyond their power. The number of primers and infant "readers" now available is such that there is no excuse for making the latter mistake, and parents are, I believe, always ready to buy any easy "readers" that may be needful to make transition easy. Special "Story Readers" are also plentiful and cheap, and their use can be authorised anywhere if the School Committee and the teacher recommend me to give the necessary permission. Where changes of teachers are frequent it is almost impossible to bring home to individuals the responsibility for the defects dwelt upon above, and this is one of the chief reasons why they persist. Of late it has been necessary to employ, in not a few very small schools, quite inexperienced teachers, who are indeed willing enough to learn, but have to gain experience and skill at the cost of much ill-directed and even futile effort.

The operation of the Training College, and the increasing inducements to young men and women to become teachers which the Minister and the Legislature have lately created, should ere long greatly lessen this difficulty.

The *School Journal* affords a welcome addition to the reading-books used by the pupils above the preparatory classes. "To its use," says Mr. Burnside, "is due in great measure the fluent and accurate reading so often obtained in the smaller country schools." It also widens the range of interest and of ideas among our scholars, and has thus materially aided in giving variety and power in dealing with composition. It is most important that the lessons in the *School Journal* should be written in simple easy English, as the reading of them has in general to be done at sight. The pretension that its pages can or should contain a reasonable course of work in geography or history might well be dropped, and the topics handled be selected for their human interest and charm of treatment.

Little improvement is to be noted in the teaching of recitation. Speaking of the smaller schools, Mr. Cox says it is with few exceptions poorly taught, and Mr. Garrard expresses a like opinion. Where teachers take care to teach the reading and the understanding of the verses before they are committed to memory the result is always better. One would much like to know why this cannot always be done. Things are much more satisfactory in the larger schools. Complaints that the matter and circumstances of the poems learned are not understood are often too well founded. Mr. Cox mentions that older children have often told him of the "Kaffir trees" and the "Tamarind birds" with which the "slave" was familiar in his native country "America." It is preposterous that the literary study of poems learned by heart should be so inefficient as to leave such ideas in pupils' minds. Our younger teachers are much examined, but there is reason to fear that literary culture is not sufficiently fostered by the studies undertaken for their examinations. The simultaneous recitation or repetition of poetry, after the teacher's model or otherwise, should be used as seldom as possible. This method of dealing with it is now officially forbidden in the elementary schools of the Mother-country. Mr. Garrard justly denounces it as "a dreary soulless method that will promptly smother any real love for poetry or any desire to commit it to memory." He suggests that choice poems from the *School Journal* might be used for recitation, so that the imitation of indifferent recitation in higher classes might be eliminated, and a greater variety in the pieces secured.

In the teaching of composition in the smaller schools little improvement can be noted, and in many it is still a distinctly weak subject. Mr. Cox says, "The exercises produced are too short, ill arranged, and devoid of style. Most of the so-called teaching consists in placing a subject on the blackboard, and requiring the children to write an exercise thereon. Model compositions should be worked up by the teacher with the children. Much of the time spent in correcting mistakes would be better employed in drawing attention to the good points of the better exercises." In the larger schools much good work has been done in this subject, and Mr. Burnside notes that very fine work was shown in some of the small schools of his district. "The composition exercises," Mr. Grierson writes, "sent in for proficiency from the larger schools were distinctly good. I had not realised before that the town and suburban schools had reached such a high point of efficiency in this subject." My last year's report dealt at considerable length with the teaching of composition, and I would respectfully invite teachers to look over once more the suggestions there offered for their consideration. "A larger variety of reading, the regular use of a well-stocked library, and the practice of oral composition throughout the school will go far," Mr. Garrard thinks, "to remove the defects that are so conspicuous in the country schools." Power of thought must be developed if composition is to be worthily treated.