

*School-gardening.*—The gardening movement still continues to grow—a considerable number of schools having qualified for recognition under the Regulations for Manual and Technical Instruction, and others, though not applying for recognition, have done much towards adding to the attractive appearance of the school-grounds, and providing material and opportunity for nature-study. We cannot say, however, that we are altogether satisfied with the progress made in this direction, or that the utmost benefit has been derived from the courses undertaken. Some schools have done really well, utilizing the schemes adopted for highly educative purposes; but in others the important matters at issue have to some extent been lost sight of. It is of the utmost importance that definite courses providing for both outdoor and indoor work and experiment be prepared, and that these be arranged in such a way as to provide for regular and systematic work throughout the year. A carefully dated calendar-record of operations and experiments should be kept, and in the pupils' note-books a summary of the work dealt with, as well as an account of each experiment and what it teaches, should appear. As an attractive feature of school environment a garden has its undoubted value; but under skilful direction it becomes of even greater utility, affording opportunities for acquiring knowledge and experience which cannot fail to be helpful in future years. If this is to be the outcome of gardening operations the efforts on the part of the teacher and pupil must not be confined to the actual work in the garden, but should have close connexion with indoor lessons, where the principles underlying operations should be carefully and systematically studied. Practical operations are altogether essential, and under no circumstances should they be omitted—indeed, in all cases they should comprise the larger part of whatever course it is decided to adopt; but what are commonly known as theoretical considerations should by no means be abandoned, these being necessary if the full meaning and significance of the operations in question are to be thoroughly grasped.

*Reading.*—In the majority of schools this subject continues to be well taught, and, on the whole, is steadily improving. In the larger schools it is quite unusual to find pupils that are unable to read with some degree of fluency suitable passages previously unseen. This gratifying result is the outcome of the wider course of reading adopted, which has been fostered to some extent by the issue of the *School Journal*, by the supply of free books, and by the greater use of school and class libraries. In an appreciable number of schools, however, there is still much to be done in the matter of improving this subject, and in stimulating the reading-habit. In the preparatory classes the more approved methods of teaching are not always adopted, the alphabetic method being still in use, with but little or no attempt to teach the sound of letters. More attention is needed in the matter of associating new words with the objects or actions for which they are symbols, and in the direction of accustoming pupils to group certain words together, and so learn to apply the principles of phrasing. Here, too, the reading-lesson is not always utilized as fully as might be in affording opportunities for oral composition. From the very outset the child should be led to discuss the subject-matter of the lesson, a process which he gradually learns thoroughly to enjoy, and one which cannot fail to arouse his interest, increase his intelligence, and develop his power of expression. Although much has been already accomplished in the upper classes, there yet remains a good deal to be done in improving the expression and sympathy of the pupils' efforts. In very many cases, although the words are correctly enunciated, the entire want of expression that characterizes the oral rendering of a passage would appear to imply that its spirit and meaning were either overlooked or misunderstood. This, it need hardly be added, is a matter for regret; for, although it is neither possible nor desirable to produce a nation of elocutionists, it is both possible and desirable to train young people so that they may be able to read with sympathetic and intelligent expression. As the result of an efficient training in reading, a child should be able to read aloud in such a way that both teacher and pupils sitting with closed books may be able to follow and appreciate the passage selected. It is pleasing to note that the true significance of silent reading is gradually being recognized, and that teachers are beginning to utilize its possibilities. One of the chief purposes of teaching people to read is to enable them to interpret written and printed matter for their own information, and for this there can be no better preparation than silent reading. Moreover, the process is one in which concentration of effort and steady application play a conspicuous part, thus supplying a valuable training in the art of investigation and in self-reliance. We feel it necessary to draw attention to the use, or want of use, of the free reading-books supplied to the schools. Time after time have we found a great number of these still untouched at the end of the year. This is to be regretted in view of the importance of the subject itself, and in view, moreover, of the educative value of the contents of some of these books. We feel that a strong and persistent effort should be made to get through a number of reading-books in every standard and class during the year, and that any course which does not provide at least as much reading-matter as that contained in the free books supplied should not be deemed satisfactory. This, indeed, should be an irreducible minimum, with which only in isolated or special cases should the teacher be satisfied. We are disposed to think, moreover, that an undue amount of time is often given to what is commonly known as "comprehension." When we say this, however, it is not to be supposed that we attach little importance to this phase of the reading-lesson. We freely recognize that if reading is to become a subject of utility its teaching must result in pupils being able to discover the thought-content in the passage read. Teaching that fails to secure this cannot be regarded as sound. What we deprecate, however, is the devotion of too much time merely to the meaning of words isolated from their context, with the result that the effort becomes one of memory rather than of intelligence, and that the reading-lesson, with its immense possibilities, degenerates into something dreary and depressing, apt to be regarded by pupils as one of the hardships to which all young people must submit. An intelligent grasp of the paragraph and of the lesson as a whole is all that is needed, and this can be secured without the minute and searching analysis to which isolated words are sometimes subjected. The time that is too often devoted to this special task could more profitably be spent in getting into closer touch with the aim of the writer and in extending the scope of the pupils' reading.