

of disconnected scraps of from two to five lines in length, as we have observed in many schools. Further, examination of the pieces selected, in quite a number of cases, makes one suspect that the teacher's acquaintance with literature does not extend much beyond the class reading-book. Again, we not infrequently find that the same selections are used year after year, so that a shrewd pupil in a lower class may quite conceivably in his passage through the school learn the pieces he may be required to recite when he reaches Standard VI. Though these remarks do not apply to the majority of schools, we regret to say that they do apply to a very considerable number.

*Spelling.*—It is only in recent years that educationists have come to realize that a child has three vocabularies—(1) its reading vocabulary, (2) its spoken vocabulary, and (3) its written vocabulary. The first is the most extensive, and the third is the smallest; and yet we require a child to spell correctly all the words in his reading-book—*i.e.*, practically all the words he can read. A glance at any of the reading-books in use in our schools will reveal the fact that they—one and all—contain large numbers of words which are outside the written vocabulary of the reader; and in the Fifth and Sixth Standard books are many words that the average person would never use in writing. Then, again, spelling is seldom taught; a number of words, varying from a dozen to twenty or thirty, are set for homework, and the pupil is expected to be perfect in the spelling of these next day. The words set are generally the longest, the most uncommon, and the most irregular in the lesson, while the pupils' composition exercises show that it is usually the small, everyday words that are misspelt. Further, it would appear that, as a rule, spelling is regarded as a visual exercise, whereas those who have interested themselves in the psychology of the subject are of opinion that there are children who learn more readily through the ear than through the eye, and some who learn only by writing the word a number of times. With a little trouble on the part of the teacher spelling could be made much less burdensome, and probably more accurate than it is. If, in each class, *three* new words were *taught* per day—not merely as words, but as words in sentences: written on the blackboard, spelled aloud, and embodied in sentences by the class—the child would have a written vocabulary of about six hundred words a year, or over four thousand during his school life; and four thousand words, properly chosen, would more than suffice for the written expression of the thoughts of Standard VI pupils.

*Writing.*—Experiments in the direction of securing greater speed combined with legibility have been made in a number of schools. In some cases the results are hopeful, in others they are disappointing. There is little doubt that the speed attained in the majority of our schools is not sufficiently high, and that pupils are prone to regard a writing test as the one exercise which on no account must be hurried, as something detached from ordinary written work, and hence as an end instead of a means to an end. We wrote at some length on this subject in our report for 1914, and do not propose to repeat what has already been said, further than again to draw attention to what is being successfully accomplished in other countries. When a pupil reaches Standard V or Standard VI he should have developed such control over the muscles used in writing as will enable him to write legibly at least from ten to fifteen words per minute. The writing test set at the recent examination for Standard VI certificates consisted of two words to be written in text-hand and a prose extract of 212 words to be written in the pupil's ordinary hand, for which the time allowed was half an hour. If five minutes were spent on the two text-hand words—and this appears to be a very liberal allowance—there would still remain twenty-five minutes in which to write 212 words: *i.e.*, the exercise could be completed in the allotted time at an average speed of eight and a half words per minute. Only a very small percentage of pupils were able to complete the exercise, and a large number wrote less than half the words set. The quality of the writing in the schools remains much the same as in former years.

*Composition.*—We cannot discover much improvement in this subject. In the larger and more efficient schools it is well taught and well advanced, pupils in the upper classes being able to write easily and at some length on any suitable subject. In other schools, however, we notice the same weakness and faults as in former years, and in some but little effort towards improvement. It should never be forgotten that the ability to evolve ideas, marshal them in logical sequence, and find for them suitable expression is not given to every child—indeed, is the heritage of but few—and hence in the great majority of cases regular and systematic instruction is necessary. Children must be taught how to deal with and expand a subject, how to follow out lines of reasoning, how to exhaust one phase before passing to another, and how to arrange details so as to bring out effective expression. We are more than ever convinced that where the subject shows weakness the reason lies in want of teaching, failure to realize the importance of oral composition, and lack of appreciation of the value of good models suitably dealt with.

*English.*—Closely allied with composition is the subject commonly known as "English," a comprehensive term, but here applied to instruction in such portions of grammar, analysis, synthesis as are needed to enable pupils, amongst other things, to express themselves easily and readily either orally or in writing. No subject requires greater care in the preparation of a suitable scheme, no subject lends itself in larger degree to co-ordination with other phases of work, and no subject, if well handled, gives more encouraging results. A good scheme must have its roots in the lowest classes, gradually grow through the standards, expanding as it rises, and present an unbroken surface throughout its entire length. We fear these obvious truisms are too often lost sight of, and that many teachers do not fully appreciate the possibilities in a good scheme of English, nor the necessity for exercising extreme care in its preparation. Much useful assistance in drawing up schemes in this subject may be obtained from the following publications: "Model Class Books of English," Chambers and Ker (Blackie); "Teaching Composition," Feasy (Pitman); "On the Writing of English," Warner (Blackie); "The Writing of English," Brewster (Home University Library); "A First Book in Writing English," Lewis (Macmillan).