

think, be very great. Such books would provide abundance of "unseen reading", no chapter being read more than once, every lesson would be fresh and stimulating, and the "sight" reading-lesson would come to be regarded by the children as the most delightful of all their exercises. The books should be read with the view to practice in reading, and to induce a taste and love for it. There should be no dwelling upon mistakes or grind of any sort, and there should enter into the exercise nothing that might tend to make it irksome. All "language grind" (of which there must necessarily be a good deal) should be confined to the "reader" or "readers" purchased by the children. One such "reader," if well chosen, would be sufficient for each child, if Committees purchased for each class two or three sets of books such as we are recommending. Our present plan has succeeded neither in making good "sight" readers nor in developing in our pupils a taste for reading, we ought, therefore, to cast about for another

The dictation and spelling exercises are generally well done, but there is a good deal of inferior spelling in the composition exercises and in the answers to the questions in geography. The writing continues to suffer seriously from the careless scribbling allowed on the slates and in exercise-books, and we cannot help thinking that progress is retarded by the highly improper attitudes in which the children are allowed to sit and the unnatural way in which they are allowed to hold the pen. The improper sitting attitudes must be condemned also on grounds of hygiene. The diagrams supplied to the schools by the Board have not effected any improvement in this matter—Vertical writing has been introduced in several schools, but it is an outstanding success in only five or six. It appears to require more thorough-going blackboard teaching than many teachers are prepared to give it. The drawings presented to us, representing the year's work of the children, are generally satisfactory, a considerable proportion of them being good, and some of them even excellent.

Though many children fail in arithmetic, the subject is, in the majority of schools, well treated. The teaching is, however, more abstract than it should be. For example, we seldom see in the middle and senior classes a new operation represented in the concrete. It is generally made a reasoned operation in the manipulation, not of things, but of symbols. The manipulation of things should go hand in hand with the manipulation of their symbols on the blackboard or on the slates. For this purpose the ball-frame can be made quite as useful in these as in the junior classes. Arithmetic must necessarily be very puzzling to those who cannot see the things behind their symbols. We have again to complain of the wretchedly illogical way in which many teachers allow their pupils to set out their work. It is difficult to convince such teachers that methods are more important than results. Mental arithmetic has recently been made a class-subject, and already there is, we regret to say, a marked decline in its quality.

The quality of the composition varies a good deal. In schools in which the aim is high, and the grammar exercises are chosen with the view to exemplify points in sentence structure and sentence connection, it is generally very creditable, but in those in which the aim is low, and grammar is treated as having no bearing on composition, it is generally poor. In the class reading-books are to be found exemplifications of a very large number of types of sentence structure, and it is with these that the grammar-lesson should chiefly deal. As indicating the nature of the connection of sentence to sentence, and, therefore, of thought to thought, the phraseology of reference (conjunctions, pronouns, and connective phrases) plays a very important part in composition, and is deserving of more attention than it receives. In a large number of schools too much reliance is, we think, placed on mere practice in writing. Practice and plenty of it there must be, but practice alone, though it may produce readiness in writing sentences of some sort, cannot produce excellence in composition. We feel sure that better results would be achieved if less time were given to "theme" writing, and more to instruction in sentence structure and sentence connection and to criticism of what the children write. In most schools the sole critic of the composition is the teacher, who marks and corrects every error in the exercises. The bulk of the gross mistakes are errors in the spelling of easy words, and in concord of subject and verb and of pronoun and antecedent, all of them errors such as might be detected and corrected by the pupils themselves if they were trained to read their own or each other's work with critical care. The teacher, however, does for his pupils what they should do for themselves, and thus violates one of the most important canons of teaching. The pupils should correct their own errors. If, upon trial, they should be found unable to correct one or more of them, the work of the teacher is not to correct the particular blunders, but to explain their nature, and show by exemplification of them in other contexts, how to correct them. Punctuation needs much more attention than it has been receiving, and better judgment should be exercised in the choice of subjects for composition. As a rule, abstract subjects and those that have to be got up from books should be avoided. At present there are too many of these in the bulk of the programmes of work presented to us. We recommend narratives of personal experience and description of scenes and of objects that can be seen and handled. The description of objects can also be made a fine exercise in observation—a function of mind that is too much neglected. In a good many schools the composition exercises of the senior classes are done on slates, the teachers allowing four or five minutes for the correction of twenty or thirty of them. A moment's consideration should show the absurdity of such pretence at teaching composition.

The results of the examination in grammar are very disappointing. Here and there we come upon classes that have been well drilled in the mechanism of the sentence, but the bulk of the children we examine show dense ignorance of the grammar of the sentences they have been reading during the year. The examination is always conducted *viva voce*, and the examples are selected from the class reading-book. No unseen sentence is ever placed before the children, and yet even in Standard VI. the amount of blundering in the parts of speech and in the function of phrases and clauses is most disheartening. Nothing is to our minds more certain than that the majority of our children are now leaving school without either a technical or a working knowledge of the me-