

books were found sufficient here. In requiring all the standard classes to read two books yearly, the Board is undoubtedly furthering and not hindering the education of the young of the district, and all parents would do well to heartily co-operate with the Board in securing a worthy training in this branch of instruction.

In dealing with new and difficult words I have often noticed that pupils have no idea of putting them into syllables, and then trying to sound the syllables in combination. New words of regular sound should be dealt with in this way from the primer classes upwards. To tell the pronunciation as a matter of course, without attempting to lead the pupils to make it out for themselves, is not an educative process; it is *cram* in one of its least disguised forms. This fault is far too prevalent.

Some progress can be noted in the handling of explanation of the language of the reading-lessons and in the comprehension of their matter. In the majority of the schools better work could and should be done in these directions. In the "Suggestions," circulated among teachers by order of the Board, I have dealt pretty fully with this subject, and I feel convinced that if teachers would weigh these suggestions, and embody their spirit in the daily treatment of the English lessons, the education given in our schools would be signally improved. The development of a spirit of intelligent study—surely one of the chief aims of all education—depends more on the way this subject is treated than on any other section of the school work. I fear that many teachers do not themselves study and prepare the reading-lessons so as to turn them to the best account for the mental discipline and growth of their pupils, and the habits of careful and thoughtful preparatory study are but little fostered among the scholars. On this subject Mr. Dickinson's opinion is quite in accord with mine. "All pupils in the higher classes," he says, "should have a dictionary, and be trained to study the reading-lessons. I have been surprised to find how little of this has been done in the higher classes." Mr. Goodwin speaks somewhat more favourably of this part of the work of the schools.

Recitation is satisfactory in the great majority of the schools, and good in a large number. The tasteful reading of the poems to be learned should in all cases be taught before the pupils are set to commit them to memory, and the meaning should be carefully considered. I am sorry to say that there is still occasion for repeating these cautions.

"Spelling," says Mr. Dickinson, "in the dictation test and in the written exercises is improving;" and Mr. Goodwin remarks, "I have not had to record many failures in spelling. The test is too easy. I am afraid spelling is a weak subject." Mr. Crowe considers that "this subject is not taught with the success which its importance deserves," and he thinks "too much dependence is placed on oral spelling." Our pupils, I believe, can spell easy passages very fairly indeed, and mistakes in the spelling of simple words in composition and other written exercises are becoming less frequent; but a previously unseen test of quite ordinary difficulty would show how restricted their knowledge of spelling is. The results of the recent junior scholarship examination in this subject fully bear out this view. It should be more usual for teachers to keep lists of misspelt words, and to use them from time to time for revision.

The "Bold-writing Copy-books" are now used in nearly all the schools. I have seldom had to fail a pupil in any standard for writing, and I consider this subject is satisfactorily taught. Mr. Dickinson remarks about it, "Writing is not receiving the attention it formerly received in this district"; and Mr. Goodwin shares this opinion. It is certainly true, as Mr. Crowe points out, that very little care is taken to train pupils to sit in a good position, and to hold pens and pencils properly. Without doubt this neglect tends to make the teaching inefficient, and it argues a serious want of care and attention on the part of teachers, as well as obvious failure to train their pupils to carry out their directions. Of criticism and demonstration of faults at the black-board there is no lack; what is more often lacking is the force and earnestness needed to effectually impress the teaching. In the schools of Germany the greatest importance is attached to the way in which the pen is held and moved, and long and elaborate practice in these matters is given before a pupil is allowed to touch paper with an inked pen. The indifference of the great majority of our teachers to these confessedly important aids to good writing is most discreditable. It is a commonplace to say that the writing in exercise-books is seldom as good as that in copy-books, and is sometimes markedly inferior. Written home exercises are still a fruitful cause of careless writing, especially when they are too long, as they still sometimes are. In large classes their correction is a laborious, and often, I fear, an unfruitful task, and close attention to other details is apt to withdraw attention from the quality of the penmanship. Their correction, moreover, is too often intrusted to pupil-teachers, so that the teacher really responsible for the training of the class has only a superficial knowledge of what is doing in this direction. I should like to see written home exercises made very short indeed in all the classes below Standard V., and if they are not well looked after it would be a gain to discontinue them altogether. To make up for this reduction of written work two or three exercises a week should be neatly written out in school in exercise-books kept expressly for that purpose. Mr. Dickinson points out that work of this kind is unknown in many of the schools of his district. As it would be done under the teacher's eye, the writing should be as good as the pupils can make it, and great importance should be attached to neatness and care.

Freehand and geometrical drawing are generally satisfactory; model drawing is not so good. In the lower classes drawing is taught with most success where blank drawing-books only are used. Some of the series of drawing-books authorised by the Minister provide a very indifferent course for the lower standards. Teachers might well show better judgment in selecting the books to be used in these classes. The use of rulers and measures where their use is forbidden may still be frequently noticed.

"Good work has been shown in arithmetic in Standards I., II., III., and IV.," Mr. Dickinson reports, "but there was a disastrous failure in Standards V. and VI." "It is not easy," he adds, "to account for the weakness in the upper standards. The tests this year were much more difficult than the tests of preceding years, and I am afraid that in too many instances the teachers have merely aimed at reaching the standard of attainments thus set up." The experience of the other