

admitted to be too narrow. The usual amount has been one small book for each standard class. For some years we have had in this district, in schools with more than one teacher, two books for both Standard I. and Standard II., and we think the time has come when in such schools Standard III. should also undertake another book. Moreover, though we hardly venture to recommend a hard-and-fast rule in the matter, we shall hereafter regard the use of an additional book in any or all classes of all schools whatever as a feature deserving high commendation. It is by no means necessary that every child should have the additional book: in small schools one for each class, which could be passed from hand to hand, would be sufficient. The choice of books might be very safely left to the teacher. The contents should comprise if possible a due amount of narrative, description, and biography; such lessons, in short, as will, while extending the pupils' vocabularies and enlarging their mental horizons, fire their hearts, stir their emotions, and lead captive their imaginations. Anything approaching to a critical knowledge of the language and matter of the extra books would, of course, not be expected. The essential discipline consequent upon the acquisition of such knowledge may be secured by a study of selected portions of the ordinary class-book. The plea for a high standard in reading has been excellently put by Fitch in his lectures on teaching, and we cannot do better than reproduce two sentences: "Consider," he says, "how great an acquisition one person who is a fine and expressive reader is in a household, how much he or she can do to add to the charm, the happiness, and to the intelligence of the home." And again: "If you will further consider that the human voice is the most vivid translation of human thought, that it is the most supple, the most docile, the most eloquent interpreter of whatever is best in the reason and in the heart of man, you will see that there is a very real connection between right thought and right utterance; and that anything you can do to make speech more finished, more exact, more expressive, and more beautiful will have a very direct bearing on the mental and spiritual culture of your pupils."

*Spelling.*—The average pupil spells, on the whole, in a satisfactory manner; but the teaching of the subject, so far as it may be taught, is not, as a rule, so good as it might be. No subject so readily lends itself to bald treatment, and accordingly in no subject is one more apt to drop into routine. For these very reasons teachers should not be unmindful of any aids that may be available. Whenever a difficulty crops up the blackboard should be resorted to. And not this alone. The mental vision, too, should be stimulated by the visualising of the underlying idea, so that the word may become the pupil's own through the channels of sound, sight, and sense. Then, again, a word may suggest the family or group to which it belongs, and the pupils, after performing a brief induction, will be able to furnish a rule for the correct spelling of the group. This method of arranging words into groups according to well-understood principles of classification has in English schools practically superseded the old method of spelling only the words occurring in the reading-lesson, but with us it has yet secured but little foothold.

*Writing.*—A fair standard of handwriting has been attained by the majority of our pupils. There is, as might be expected, great diversity in the quality of the writing in different schools. It is uniformly best in those schools in which the teachers are themselves expert penmen, and worst in schools in which the teachers, being deficient in the art, do not make up for their deficiency by a systematic exposition of principles. In schools in which systematic instruction is given and unsatisfactory work uniformly rejected writing will be good, and *vice versa*. Now that teaching on Kindergarten principles is common in many of the lower departments of our schools, the manual dexterity and knowledge of terms may be, and in many cases are, very profitably utilised when instruction is being given in the more advanced parts of handwriting. There is at present keen competition between the various styles of writing, the vertical bidding fair to oust the sloping hand. Our experience does not as yet warrant our speaking authoritatively on the subject, but the experience of some who have studied the matter under advantageous circumstances is distinctly favourable to the upright hand. It is, they say, more conducive to the pupils' health, to ease of acquirement and production, as well as being more rapid and legible. Of one thing, however, there can be little doubt: the vertical system badly taught leads to very vicious results, and teachers who do not feel that it *is* the best system, and that they can teach it well, may be very safely recommended to leave it alone.

*Drawing.*—The teachers, having made themselves conversant with the methods of teaching this subject, appear to feel the demands of the syllabus to be much less burdensome than they were when drawing was first put on the pass list, and not a few are justly proud of the manner in which not merely the boys but also the girls go through the entire course. Several teachers who have observed the matter closely tell us that the better methods of instruction now prevalent in the infant classes have greatly minimised the difficulties that pupils meet with in taking a course of drawing-lessons.

*Arithmetic.*—In the majority of our schools this subject is well taught. Certain outstanding faults to which we called attention last year have been in some measure remedied, though in a number of schools there is still much to be desired in the way of neat work and logical arrangement. No subject more readily discloses the habit of mental orderliness on the part of the pupils, and the spirit of method on the part of the teachers. Arithmetic, considered merely as the art in reckoning, has also been improved in certain directions, but here, also, much remains to be done. Many of the pupils of Standards V. and VI., who will readily work laborious sums and solve intricate problems, are hopelessly puzzled when asked the amount of discount for ready money on a certain sum at  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ , 5, or 10 per cent., or even the cost or  $1\frac{1}{3}$  dozen articles at  $2\frac{3}{4}$ d. each. So long as the social fabric is dominated by a money régime these things surely ought not to be so. The results in arithmetic at the annual examinations were in many cases far from successful. But we do not attribute the failure altogether to inferior teaching or the want of capacity on the part of the pupils. Many of the Department's test-cards for the pupils in Standards V. and VI. were of more than average difficulty, containing sums so intricate in working and expression that the pupils' chances of success were materially reduced. On the other hand, the tests set for Standard III.