

The reading is generally fairly accurate and fluent, but is often marred by indistinct articulation and by inattention to proper phrasing. The latter is the more serious defect, as it indicates a lack of an intelligent appreciation of the passage read, and until such be obtained the reading must of necessity be dull and without expression.

An idea contained in last year's report of the Inspector for Hawke's Bay took my fancy, and, as it might meet with the approval of the teachers in the larger schools and be adopted in the higher standards, either in its present form or in a modified form, I quote it in full. It will be noted that the necessity for combining reading aloud with reading silently has not been overlooked :—

"When examining at Napier, however, I was much impressed with the improved tone and widened intelligence of the senior classes. From inquiries I found that quite a new plan had been introduced, with the view of fostering among the pupils a taste for reading good literature. The results were so marked that I asked the master in charge to be good enough to write down for my information the plan he had adopted, and the following is his reply, which I quote in full :—

"I was induced to use the "unseen" Readers by being struck with the following considerations : (a.) That 25 per cent. of an ordinary Standard VI. can pass in reading as soon as they enter the class, and therefore, after once mastering the meaning and allusions of the set Readers, further going over them is not of much benefit to them. (b.) In large classes most attention has to be given to bad readers, and the good ones have to sit and hear the beautiful thoughts in a poem, or the easily flowing prose, simply murdered. (c.) Above all, in an upper class good reading does not consist in reading a text-book, but in being able to read expressively and intelligently any ordinary reading-book.

"The details of the plan are as follows :—

"(1.) Only the good readers could bring books of their own to read.

"(2.) Any improvement entitled a weak reader to join the silent readers.

"(3.) Each book was brought to me for inspection, and only books with some claim to literary and instructive merit were accepted ; only I made one exception : If I saw a pupil was not naturally a lover of reading, I allowed him or her to bring almost anything which interested or amused him, my idea being to encourage reading first, and a choice of better books soon followed.

"(4.) In taking the lesson, I let the class as a whole go on reading, but called on each in turn to read at least a page, and if necessary I would stop the others and let them listen. In this way they saw the varieties of style in different authors, and the corresponding varieties of ways of interpreting these by expression, accent, and modulation.

"(5.) Nearly every pupil had a dictionary of some sort, and turned up any unintelligible words. Any whose meaning given in the dictionary did not fit in were made a note of, as were any phrases or allusions which the children did not understand. Ten minutes at the end of the lesson sufficed for me to explain these.

"One or two children actually could not get a single book from home to read. These I gave a copy of Stead's cheap books, "Ivanhoe," "The Hour and the Man," and the like. The children seeing these books asked me if more could be got, and on showing them the list I got orders for 120 copies of standard books. One of the boys who had no books at home ordered half a dozen."

Spelling in the special tests is on the whole satisfactory, and the spelling on the general papers shows steady improvement. In some districts marks are taken from spelling as a subject if the spelling in the other work is unsatisfactory. This plan I do not follow, but deduct marks for the geography, composition, &c., if the spelling in these subjects is inferior. Indeed, in composition, at least fairly accurate spelling is insisted upon, as I consider that an essay or letter that is marred by inferior spelling is almost valueless. In grammar and history, also, poor spelling is highly censurable, as it points to defective methods of teaching and to lack of thoroughness in instruction.

Writing continues to be very satisfactory in most schools, and the examination-papers are marked by neatness and generally satisfactory penmanship. Insisting upon a high standard in this respect, as I consider a training in habits of neatness, care, and tidy and clear arrangement of work to be of the greatest value to the pupils in after-life, I allow somewhat more time to arithmetic and other paper work than is often allowed, and I am more and more convinced that the extra time is well spent. Indeed, I have seldom grounds for serious complaint ; on the contrary, the neatness of the pupils' papers is often commended in the examination reports.

Freehand drawing is satisfactory. The tests in scale drawing are well done, and those in geometry fairly well done. Model drawing and solid geometry, however, are very inferior. As these two subjects are taken in Standard VI. only, and as some latitude is allowed to teachers in the choice of subjects, it is only the increasing number of pupils in Standard VI. that gives one an opportunity for judging the quality of the work throughout the district, and I have found it very disappointing. Indeed, I have been surprised to find so many cases in which the teachers themselves did not understand the principles, with the result that their pupils in Standard VI. failed utterly in drawing. Nor is the weakness in this drawing confined to standard pupils. As supervisor at the examination of teachers I have been amazed at the attempts of our pupil-teachers and ex-pupil-teachers to draw simple models. With a view to bringing about an improvement I should recommend teachers who feel a deficiency in this respect to take advantage of any opportunity for receiving instruction ; and as the number of pupils in Standard VI. is increasing year by year, the schools should be more fully supplied with models.

In arithmetic there is much room for improvement in the way in which the text-books are used. Teachers too often unreasoningly follow the order of the exercises in a text-book, instead of using it as a collection of examples intended to facilitate class-work and to save the teacher trouble in making up his own. In Standard IV., for instance, pupils are taken through avoird-