

same kind of work in the other. To us there does not seem to be room here for divided opinion. The question is: How to provide the means? That question should, we reply, be faced and answered by the Education Department as it has been faced and answered by the Home Education Department—namely, by an increased grant for the teaching of what is called the “Advanced Department,” the class into which, if they remain at school, pass the children who have obtained the merit certificate, and which, in its main features, corresponds to our class above Standard VI. Its purpose is to prolong school life and, by making secondary education as accessible to the country child as to the town child, to create equality of opportunity to all the children of the land. This is precisely what ought to be the purpose of our class above Standard VI. At Home, the authorities have created the department, and provided the means to enable it to discharge its functions; our authorities have done the first and left undone the second. There, for the advanced department they have more than doubled the grant allowed for the department below it; here the grant remains the same. A double grant for the teaching of secondary subjects would last year have increased the Board’s revenue by more than £2,000; and, if a similar grant had been made for all the years we have been teaching these subjects, the Board would not only have escaped the stress of its present impecuniosity, but would have been able to make provision for teaching in one school all the city children who wish to remain at school a year or two after passing the Sixth Standard. We want classes above Standard VI., advanced departments, superior primary schools, call them what you will; but with the thing we must have the means with which to make it efficiently perform its functions. Who shall provide it?

The Minister of Education has recently added another department of work to the school course. We refer to “handwork” now included in the syllabus for the first time. With this class of work we are in entire sympathy, and we trust that the Minister has counted the cost and resolved to bear it.

We have left ourselves but little space for comment on the subjects of instruction. Indistinct utterance and impurity of vowel sounds are the chief mechanical defects in our reading. Two years ago we gave lists of words in which these defects were frequently exemplified. The lists would bear repeating, for the defects are still very common. Undoubtedly, there ought to be more articulation and mouth exercises in the junior classes, and the exercises should be kept up in the other classes. In sight-reading there is some excuse for errors in interpretation of the meaning of parts of the passage read; but there is none for slovenly indistinct utterance of familiar words. Accordingly, we penalise heavily errors of this kind. Intelligent reading, of which we hear a good deal, implies power to interpret the language and thought of what is read. It is, in no small measure, a question of vocabulary. Nobody finds much pleasure in reading a book that contains on every page many words of the meaning of which he is ignorant; and we cannot reasonably expect our children to read well or to become reading men and women, unless, during their school life, we furnish them with a fair working vocabulary of literary English. The acquisition of such an equipment should be one of the chief aims of our education system; for, if children leave school without it, they leave without the means of self-culture; without adequate means of expression, and without the key to the vast treasures of thought and knowledge bequeathed to them by the great minds of the nation. In our opinion, neither the importance nor the difficulty of English teaching has yet received due recognition from the framers of school programmes.

Passing to another branch of English—namely, grammar and composition—we have to express our deep regret that the department, while remodelling the regulations, did not recast the syllabus. It is, for instance, difficult to imagine anything more misleading to teachers than the present divorce of grammar from composition. What is grammar chiefly concerned with? The functions of words and the build of sentences. Is not composition concerned with precisely the same? Grammar teaches through model examples the principles that underlie sentence-building; composition applies these principles to our own written and spoken speech; but how can we apply them if we do not know them? And how can we learn to know them without studying them? Grammar and composition are, in truth, interdependent parts of one and the same art—the art of expression: neither can be separated from the other without detriment to both; and their separation in the syllabus is illogical and unnatural. It is unworthy of a great department.

Again, even as a scheme of work, the grammar syllabus, though in perfect accord with the ideas that prevailed when it was devised, about twenty years ago, is utterly at variance with present-day conceptions. Then the sentence was considered as consisting of so many “parts of speech”; now it is considered as a unit of expression consisting of two parts—the part denoting the thing thought about and the part denoting what the mind affirms of the thing—in technical language, the subject and the predicate. These are the necessary parts of the sentence, and are therefore the parts with which the children should begin their grammar studies. According to the syllabus, this simple conception of the sentence or unit of expression is to be brought before the pupils, not when they begin their grammar course, but after they have learned to distinguish all the parts of speech and to inflect the noun, the adjective, and the pronoun. They begin grammar in Standard III.; they continue it in Standard IV.; but not till they reach Standard V., if they are kept to the syllabus, do they enter upon the study of the necessary parts of the sentence. In this standard and after having given two years of their school life to the consideration of the “parts of speech,” they begin to do what they ought to have done at the commencement of the grammar course. The verb is the key-word of the sentence. Every day children use it and see and hear it used in all its tenses; yet, according to the syllabus, they must study it for two long years as a mere “part of speech,” never for a moment considering its simple time functions and forms. The complex sentence, the typical sentence of English speech, finds no place in grammar below Standard VI. This means that, if the syllabus is adhered to, only those children