

work or brush drawing and colouring has been taken up, instead of the ordinary course, with promising success. I hope to see a wide extension of this movement, for this form of drawing appears to give a better and surer training in freehand and freearm work, and undoubtedly invests the lessons with an interest unknown in the practice of drawing with slate or lead pencils—a fact of great significance. Blank drawing-books are now in very general use, except in the lower classes of the smaller schools, and should be used everywhere.

In the larger schools some improvement in the teaching of grammar can be noted, but elsewhere no general progress can be recorded. In Standards III. and IV. it is usually satisfactory, and sometimes good; in Standards V. and VI. seldom more than fair, and frequently moderate. Mr. Mulgan, however, describes the work in Standards V. and VI. as very fair. It is not want of time but want of interest and of an earnestly pursued and well arranged course of treatment that retards progress here. I would recommend teachers who desire to do better justice to it to consider what I have said in the "Suggestions for the Guidance of Teachers" (page 17 *et seq.*).

Fair work is being done in the teaching of history. Mr. Crowe and Mr. Purdie reckon it generally satisfactory. Mr. Grierson says it is "poorly known in most schools." In the larger schools it is adequately treated, but there is a noticeable want of narrative power. Asked a number of narrow questions on details, pupils answer creditably, but if invited to tell what they know of an event—the Trial of the Seven Bishops, for example—they make a poor appearance in displaying their knowledge. This is due less to ignorance than want of practice in oral narrative. Teachers would do well to cultivate narrative power more sedulously. In a few schools history has been dropped in favour of handwork, and this exchange is likely to become more general. One or two teachers who have made this change feel that their pupils are sustaining a serious loss in learning nothing of history, and have suggested that the use of a short text-book might be authorised as an extra reader. I have been looking out for a suitable work of this kind, and may soon be able to recommend one to the Board.

The teaching of object lessons shows some advance in aim and in thoroughness. Mr. Grierson considers it "satisfactory for the most part," and Mr. Purdie notes that it has "somewhat improved," and particularly in aim. Mr. Goodwin says object lessons "are treated too bookishly," and he doubts if a "clear opinion of their educative value can be formed" by questioning in the subjects in which the teachers have given lessons. "The examiner very often only finds out what the children have been told." The cause of this, however, is not the method of examination so much as the method of teaching the lessons, of which Mr. Goodwin says, "Their real scope seems to be either misunderstood or neglected by most teachers, who persist in telling too much, and in leaving too little to be drawn from the pupils." If "objects" are really used in educating and illustrating the matters taught, I think it highly improbable that the pupils' knowledge will connect itself with the teacher's verbal explanation rather than with the things seen and handled or experimented on. Mr. Mulgan "cannot report much improvement in this section. There is still too much memorising and too little real observing." He considers the average teacher's questioning about objects too suggestive, so that it fails to lead pupils to frame their answers from original observation and reasoning. "The average object lesson," he thinks, "when once given has done its work and seldom requires to be repeated in the same form." Repetition leads the teacher to attach an undue importance to the knowledge imparted, and "in the case of pupils stimulates memory-effort rather than thought-power." He also attributes much of the faulty teaching to the practice of examining from the list of lessons given by the teacher during the year—a practice, be it remembered, that is expressly enjoined on Inspectors by the words of the syllabus. On the general question here raised I am of opinion that skilful examination will seldom fail to disclose whether the object lessons given are gaining the ends of such teaching, and that the observation of lessons that are being taught (and an Inspector may see one if he wishes in every school he visits for inspection) will afford decisive evidence on the point, so far as a sample shows the quality of the mass. Moreover, the knowledge gained through object lessons is by no means to be despised, and any examination that ignored the teacher's yearly syllabus of lessons would necessarily have to leave it out of account. A combination of the two plans would doubtless be best, and this treatment is quite practicable now, if time is available for it. When we are sufficiently enlightened to provide an Inspector for every fifty schools, such a procedure would be most natural.

I have noted that children are usually interested in object lessons, and in some schools they are the treats of the week. To maintain this interest they must not deal with things of which most children have already a familiar knowledge, for novelty and interest go hand in hand. In the infant and primer classes the time-honoured topics of the "umbrella," "a slate," "a brick," "a lump of coal," "a piece of kauri-gum," &c., are quite suitable. There is too much working on objects of this type in the lower standard classes, where they should yield place to less familiar and more interesting subjects of study. The futility of dealing *ad nauseam* with quite familiar objects is well illustrated by some remarks of Mr. Grierson's. "It is often amusing," he writes, "in a country school to hear a town-bred lady gravely questioning a class of farm-bred children on the points and uses of the cow or the sheep. Probably any member of the class could teach her a good deal about these animals and their products; and the young lady finds exercise for all her ingenuity and skill in restraining some enterprising youngster from jumping up and putting an end to the lesson by telling in a breath all that she intends to spin out over half an hour." This little picture shows us how necessary is careful selection of topics and of modes of treatment that will add to the pupils' existing stock of knowledge, and teach them to see and learn the significance of what often lies beneath the surface.

The chief impediment to a better training through object teaching seems to me to be the imperfect equipment of many teachers in first-hand knowledge of common things, both animate and inanimate. Only first-hand examination and inquiry can give the teacher that experience in careful