

tinuity of the instruction being broken through cessation of attendance for periods varying from weeks in some cases to months in others, and from the employment of temporary teachers whose interest in the children could not be expected to be as intense as is deemed necessary in the case of those that hold permanent appointments.

Taking the schools and the subjects in bulk as we have done in this general estimate, and comparing the results with our last year's record, we must say that the schools as a whole have barely maintained their position. That is not to say that the teachers as a body have not worked as faithfully as before—indeed, it is safe to say that most of them never worked harder—but it was their first attempt to grapple with the new syllabus, and they were feeling their way towards a reasonable fulfilment of its requirements, some upborne by eager enthusiasm and confidence, others weighed down by sad doubts and misgivings. The experience gained during the past year should lighten the burden and make for improvement and progress.

A review of the marks awarded for reading shows that this subject is generally good in the larger schools. The pupils read with fluency and clearness, and in many cases with pleasing expression. This last quality, which is the best measure of the reader's intelligence and of his appreciation of the underlying thought of the passage he is reading, is still too often wanting. In many instances its place is taken by an exaggerated modulation and inflection attained after frequent and painful repetition of the same lesson till each pupil has caught the trick of rising and falling after the teacher's pattern, which may have been very good as expressing the teacher's interpretation, but becomes stilted and artificial when repeated by the pupils. It is a thin veneer that, under the fire of a brief oral test in comprehension, blisters and cracks, exposing the plain deal beneath. Children should not be taken through the same lesson over and over again in a finicking pursuit of elusive niceties of inflection, grasping at the shadow while the substance is let go. It is not in this way that teachers will be able to carry out the purpose of cultivating in the pupils the habit of reading, and a taste for good literature. Nor will he accomplish much in this direction by that most wretched of all school devices, namely, simultaneous reading, the sure destroyer of taste in and for reading. In the small schools, with a few bright exceptions, reading is for the most part marked "fair to satisfactory," a state of things that should not continue now that the range of subjects in these schools has been materially lessened under the new syllabus.

In the majority of our schools the teaching of composition has been carried on with zest and freshness of treatment. Teachers have been driven by the spirit of inquiry that is stirring the minds of all at the present time to doubt the efficacy of their former methods, and in their doubts and difficulties have been on the outlook for help from all available sources. During our visits we did what we could to assist those that were seeking for the light, and by the giving of special lessons and of advice as to suitable text-books have endeavoured to lead the way towards improvement. So far the progress made has not been of any special moment; but there is abundant promise of success in what has been achieved in many of the junior classes. After a brief conversation about some object, or incident, or picture, children of the Second Standard have written exercises that for freedom from errors and ease of diction put to shame the cramped and laboured efforts of pupils of the higher standards. In a number of schools a scrutiny of the composition exercises that have been marked by the teachers reveals a carelessness in the correction of errors and a leniency of criticism of faulty construction that go far to account for the miserable productions frequently handed in for our perusal at examinations. If teachers would rightly appraise the value of oral composition, on which so much stress is laid in the syllabus, and would insist on good oral answering in every lesson that is given, they would be going a long way towards training their pupils in the correct and ready use of their mother-tongue, both in speech and in writing.

In most of the schools the style of the writing is the vertical, and wherever this system is carefully taught most satisfactory results are produced. That the results are not so good in many schools as they ought to be is not the fault of the system, but of the teaching. In this system, as in any other that may be adopted, there must be intelligent direction of the pupils as to the posture they assume and the mode of holding the pen, and unremitting care must be exercised in the supervision of the work in copy-books and exercises, for without these precautions no school handwriting will ever be good. If bad writing is general in a school, it is a sure indication of weakness of discipline, and it would be well for a good many of our teachers to recognise what this means in their case.

In twenty-one schools spelling was "good to excellent," in thirty-two it was "fair to satisfactory," and in the rest it was "weak." Whether one's school is to take its place in the highest class for this subject, or in the lowest, is simply a matter of painstaking effort from day to day, or the reverse. Though not gifted with any high degree of teaching-skill, one does not need to despair of seeing his pupils give a good account of themselves in spelling-tests taken from the reading-books they have used, and it is on such a test that the spelling of a school is to a large extent judged. In the syllabus prominence is given to word-building as a means of teaching spelling in all the standards, and to make such lessons attractive and successful calls for skilful treatment. Regular practice in this, with wider reading on the part of the pupils, should be of service in saving them from the pitfalls that beset the steps of the unwary. In the ordinary business of life the bad speller will receive little sympathy. It has been remarked with truth that "spelling is a branch of knowledge of which the possession procures no credit, but the want entails disgrace."

Twenty schools have been written down as "weak" in arithmetic, and fourteen as "good to very good." "Fair" and "satisfactory," in about equal proportions, denote the state of the rest. In all the standards there is plenty of room for improvement in this subject, the successful treatment of which must always be regarded as evidence that the teaching has been systematic and skilful, and the discipline effective. A closer study of the requirements of the syllabus and of the methods outlined therein is strongly recommended to every one whose reputation as a teacher of arithmetic is still in the making.

In most schools the drawing lessons have been made much more interesting than in the past by the introduction of the practice of drawing from actual objects of a simple kind, and by correlating the freehand drawing with the instruction in nature-study. Blank books of large size should always