

In this connection we would again point out that a serious weakness in some of our schools is the want of a definite standard of method and treatment throughout every department of the school. The headmaster should certainly satisfy himself that from the lowest to the highest class the writing is so graded that no pupil has to unlearn what has been previously taught and practised in a lower class, and that there is no break in the continuity of the system of writing adopted.

It is useless to expect children to learn to write by simply giving them dictation, composition, and similar exercises; at such times the mind should be concentrated not on the writing but on the subject-matter of the lesson. Writing lessons—that is, lessons where the mind is guiding the hand to copy some model either printed or written—will, we fear, be always necessary not only in the lower, but also in the higher classes.

HISTORY.—It is doubtful whether there has been any progress made this year in the method of teaching history. There are, no doubt, a few schools where the treatment of this subject has been on educative lines and where the results are at all commensurate with the time devoted to it, but in many schools there has been no appreciable advance made either in the discrimination shown in the selection of the matter or in the effective presentation of it. The ignorance of history shown by some of the pupils who are just on the point of leaving school calls for a strenuous effort to raise this subject from the condition it now is in.

The aim of history-teaching is not infrequently either hazy and misunderstood, or is lost sight of altogether. The teaching wants directness, method, and vigour. There is no shutting our eyes to the fact that a proportion of our teachers are so handicapped by the lack of a thorough knowledge of the subject that they cannot discriminate between what is important and what of little value, with the result that their lessons are uninteresting, spiritless, and of comparatively little educative value.

How vain it is to expect from such treatment that the pupils' outlook will be enlarged, their sympathies broadened, and their prejudices become less insular.

GENERAL.

MANAGEMENT.—Every school should have what might be called a policy, and every one on the staff, from the headmaster to the youngest pupil-teacher, should know what it is and should be aiming to carry it out. Unfortunately, this common aim and understanding are met with to only a moderate extent in our schools.

It is not an uncommon fault to find a comparatively inexperienced young teacher left in charge of several classes, and left, as far as the headmaster is concerned, to fight out his own salvation. He receives no direction, his work does not come under any regular supervision, and he is left wholly out of touch with the other classes.

Then, again, we often find, especially in some of the larger schools, a lack of continuity in the work of the different departments of the school. There should not be that cleavage between class and class which we often see. The head teacher should provide by well-graded and comprehensive schemes of work and by other means, that not only the matter taught, but also the methods adopted in each class, should as far as practicable merge almost imperceptibly into those of the class immediately above and below it. There must be no break or needless repetition. Each member of the staff should have a good knowledge of what his fellow-teachers are doing in order that the progress of the child may be as rapid and smooth as possible. It is part of the headmaster's management to devise some means of bringing his teachers into close relation.

While touching on the question of the policy of the school we feel compelled to take exception to that mistaken idea possessed by not a few of our teachers that their teaching is *valueless* in proportion as it fails to be interesting to the pupil. Misled by this theory they strive desperately to arouse interest, and are puzzled and disheartened by the meagreness of the results achieved. They fail because they put a wrong construction on the word "interest." It ought to mean that concentration which finds keen pleasure in solving a mental difficulty. Too often it means excitement, glamour, a fitful endeavour after something not worth having, the result being not intellectual strength, but mental inertness and weakness. Whenever spontaneous interest cannot be evoked the child should face the fact that even child-life is largely made up of task-work.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.—There is in this district an increasing number of schools where the teachers and Committees are taking a keen and active interest in improving the appearance of the grounds and premises.

In the best-organized schools is drawn up a rota of supervision of the playground either by monitors or teachers, whose duty it is to see that the surroundings of the school are kept clean and tidy. The teachers should never forget that the influence of environment, though oftentimes invisible and difficult to gauge, is nevertheless far-reaching, and all the more potent if the pupils themselves take some part in creating or improving their surroundings.

THE LEAKAGE OF PUPILS.—A serious blot on our primary system of education is the great leakage of pupils before they have completed the full course of work. This leakage occurs principally between Standards IV and VI. Probably over one-fifth of our pupils drop out at the Fifth Standard. It is evident that many of these will go through life uneducated. It seems to us that the State should make it exceedingly difficult for a pupil to leave school before he has gained the full benefit of the education provided for him. The remedy undoubtedly lies in raising the age-limit to fifteen, and the standard of exemption from Standard V to Standard VI.

RESULTS.—The following table shows the State schools that gained the highest results in 1910 [table not reprinted].

We have, &c.,

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