

I must again call attention to the way reading is taught, or rather heard, in many of the schools. While the pupil reads the teacher reads to himself the same passage. It is evident that under this absurd system pupils may go on mumbling for years without a teacher discovering that they cannot read at all. I believe this to be one of the main causes why so few even fairly distinct readers can be met with. No reading from a pupil should be accepted which the teacher cannot understand without the prompting of a book. This will cause some trouble at first. Perhaps fewer pupils can read aloud on any one day; but the teacher will soon find himself rewarded for his pains by the proficiency of his pupils, and the gain to them will be enormous. In many schools classes are still allowed to make the insufferable din when reading simultaneously which has been so often ridiculed and condemned. Here is another hindrance to good reading. The belief in this screaming discord belongs to the same category as the belief that "a healthy amount of noise" is necessary to the good order of a school. We are getting new lights every day, and it is not to be endured that a teacher should persistently shut his eyes to them because they did not swim into our ken some thirty years ago. It cannot be cut too deeply into the minds of teachers that a thorough knowledge of the meaning of what is read is essential to the mental training of their pupils.

As regards the teaching of composition, I find there is a tendency to go back to mechanical methods. It cannot be too often repeated that these methods, where materials are found for the pupils, are not only useless but, where alone used, mischievous. I know of schools where something like the following procedure was adopted. A class were questioned on some subject they had read, their answers were set down on the black-board, and from these scattered members they were told to build up the body of a composition exercise. I must say that anything showing a more complete distrust of nature could not well be devised. Surely these boys and girls had been given eyes to see and ears to hear for themselves, and were not left so utterly without mind as to be unable to put down, in some articulate fashion, their thoughts on what they had seen or heard. As this is a most important matter I desire to reproduce here some of the things that have been written concerning it.

"The proper methods of teaching composition seem to be little understood. What is called 'reproduction' appears to be a practice much affected by many teachers; one very popular manual of composition, at least, is mainly made up of exercises in it. By reproduction is meant that a child shall reproduce in his own words the substance of something read out to him by the teacher; for young children the subject is generally some short narrative. Now, it is evident that no child can do this. *Précis*-writing, as every one knows who has tried it, cannot be done at all well, even by grown men, without considerable practice. But *précis*-writing is child's play compared to what (on the face of it) would appear to be expected from children, for the *précis*-writer has the documents he seeks to condense before him, and may refer to them as often as he likes. But the truth is, a child does not give the substance of what is read to him in his own words. With much weariness and disgust he piles up, somehow, such paragraphs and words as he can remember. The child with the best verbal memory and the least originality does the best. I scarcely think that the operation can be called composition at all. It may be exercise not devoid of usefulness if practised occasionally, but to allow it, and similar methods where materials are supplied to the pupil, to become altogether, or in great part, substitutes for composition properly so called, is in my opinion pernicious, because calculated to dull the faculties that should come into play when what is truly composition is attempted. Any one who has taken the trouble to observe a class of children engaged in reproduction, and the same class when engaged in composition, will see by the very expression of their faces how different is the one process from the other. A child should be trained to use his own materials, to reproduce his own familiar talk, to write of the things he has seen with his own eyes and felt with his own hands. No matter how awkward and clumsy may be the structure he raises, still it is something put together by himself after his own fashion, and with materials of his own collection.

"There still lingers too much of a tendency to have recourse to reproduction in some one or other of its various disguises. The art of oral composition comes by nature, much as the art of walking does. In training to written composition we should be guided by nature's teaching. When stilts produce ease in walking, the wooden appliances so frequently pressed on our notice will no doubt produce ease in writing."

The remarks on the teaching of grammar in my last year's report are still to no small extent applicable. I would further impress on teachers the necessity of drilling their pupils from time to time in the use of the irregular or strong verbs. This will apply to nearly all the classes; for these verbs are used or abused by the youngest children in the schools. I regret to say there are some teachers who themselves abuse these verbs, and whose language is otherwise anything but grammatical at times. There are some, too, who misuse the letter "h" to an intolerable extent. Teachers who are afflicted in these ways should struggle hard to reform them altogether. When they become conscious of their defects there is a chance of amendment.

I would again point out that it is of inestimable value to children to be taught to use their own eyes. The young children should be trained to find out and name the objects in the schoolroom, and further trained to form some opinion on these objects—to consider whether they think them little or big, pretty or ugly, and the like.

Object-teaching is still very inadequately understood. A young teacher was found not long since giving a so-called object-lesson from a book. I fear this is not a solitary instance. The animals, and plants, and substances with which the pupils ought to be familiar should alone be the texts of these lessons.

The teaching of mechanical drawing has to some extent been introduced into the schools during the past year. Teachers should remember that they are expected to do their best to comply with the requirements of the standard.

Satisfactory advancement in singing has been made during the year. Mr. Young has been associated with Mr. Cranwell in the teaching. I regret to say that several assistant teachers,