

vating a good style of reading, and of giving that practice in vocal manipulation, as we may term it, which many teachers are prone to overlook and neglect. In the first perusal of a lesson the training of the eye is the chief thing to be secured; in the revisal the training of the ear and of the vocal organs should be the teacher's main aim.

The counting and tables of the infants generally receive sufficient attention, but the handling of these subjects is apt to be mechanical and even repellent. More regular and intelligent use of the ball frame would greatly aid both comprehension and acquisition. In the smaller schools much of the drilling in counting and in tables could be done by monitors under the teacher's direction. These can be much better utilised in such work than in taking reading lessons, which they are, as a rule, quite unfit to treat properly. The slate work (writing, ciphering, &c.) is seldom well looked after, and in many cases it is greatly neglected. It is, no doubt, difficult in the smaller schools to provide varied and suitable desk employments for the younger children, but this acknowledged difficulty cannot be held to justify the indifference to the matter that is shown in many small schools. A little study and resource would, even in these, make the work of the beginners vastly more pleasant and entertaining.

In the standard classes, reading, spelling, and writing are the subjects in which the pupils make the best appearance. The weight attached to intelligent reading, under the new regulations, has led to considerable improvement in fluency (though that has long been satisfactory), and also in distinctness and natural expression. In a large number of schools the reading is, indeed, as good as can be expected. This is especially true of the larger schools, but it applies to a considerable number of the small rural schools as well. In the latter it is difficult to give sufficient practice in reading, and the want of this is a very common cause of bad reading.

The explanation of the language and of the matter of the lessons is, on the whole, inferior, and in some cases it is almost worthless. In no part of the teaching is there so much room for improvement as in the handling of these parts of the English lessons. The want of comprehension is largely due to unskilful teaching and to a bad style of questioning. Instead of dealing with complete thoughts, as expressed by phrases and parts of sentences, attention is too frequently directed to single words detached from the context in which they occur. Pupils are often seen working up lists of meanings of words without any reference to the sentences in which the words are used, and no fault seems to be found with this kind of preparatory study. Preparatory study is, in our view, of the greatest value, but it needs constant intelligent direction from the teacher. Much greater care should be taken not only to explain and interpret what is not understood, but also to impress the explanations. For this purpose the blackboard should be in constant use; yet in one English lesson out of every two which an Inspector sees the blackboard is not used at all. At the end of the lesson there should be a recapitulation of the chief difficulties encountered in it; but this also is usually neglected. The backwardness in English is partly due to the small amount of matter read during the year, but still more to the preference given by teachers to the simplest reading books they can find. This is what causes the constant changing of books, of which the public so justly complain. Many of these books fail to supply a sufficient quantity of well graduated and fairly difficult matter, to render the language and expression a fit subject of educative study all the year through. The lessons should offer a certain gentle continuous stimulus to the intelligence of the scholars, sufficient to keep their minds in a state of healthy tension while engaged in their study. This condition is not, however, adequately fulfilled by many of the readers now in use, and their ease is such that a boy or girl who has passed the highest compulsory standard (the Fourth) may be quite unable to read a newspaper or a book of moderate difficulty with understanding. It is even a question if the cause of education would not be promoted by requiring each standard to read a higher book than that written for the corresponding standard in Great Britain.

In connection with writing there is extraordinary toleration of faults in the way in which pupils sit and hold the pen. Business men attach considerable importance to these matters, and experts in teaching writing would with one voice condemn such laxity as prevails in the great majority of our schools. We can only suppose that the teachers regard the way of sitting and holding the pen with indifference, for we cannot believe that serious efforts to secure a better style would be unsuccessful. In German schools attention to these points is most strongly insisted on, and we think it would be well if teachers here would look after them more carefully during writing lessons and all writing exercises.

Standard I. is the only class that does well in arithmetic. In Standards II. and III., and in many cases in Standard IV. also, the results are fair. We are satisfied that the comparatively large number of failures in this subject is not due to the difficulty of the questions set. In drawing up the arithmetic papers used during the year great care was taken to avoid everything that could be considered unfair or too difficult. That the tests were fair is, indeed, admitted by most of the teachers, who very often express great surprise and disappointment at the numerous failures, and assure us that the pupils usually work such questions with accuracy and ease. Indeed, few discover any difficulty in the questions until their pupils are found unable to answer them. The scanty success that attends the teaching of this subject is largely due to the backwardness of the pupils in English. The wording of the questions, even when it is as plain and direct as possible, often baffles their comprehension, with the result that they multiply where they should divide, or *vice versa*, or make other obvious blunders. Whatever reasoning is required in dealing with the great majority of the questions set is of the simplest character. Very often all that is needed is to consider whether the answer will be greater or less than one of the data of the question. Every paper contains enough direct or quasi-direct questions for a child to pass by them alone. One or two more difficult questions are included, to test the smarter children and the range of the teaching; but it is not necessary and not expected that every one should answer these, or even attempt them. The cure for failure to interpret simple questions correctly is to push forward the teaching of