

could be better taught if less blind reliance were placed on object-lesson books. In these the details are often too minute and technical, while points of greater importance are sometimes overlooked or but slightly noticed. The selection of matter needs to be adapted to the advancement and the circumstances of the pupils, and this adaptation can be best made by the teachers treating the subject, after adequate study and preparation, from their own point of view.

In science little is attempted, and that little is seldom well known. It appears to us that the method of teaching by lecture or oral address alone, which is almost exclusively trusted to in our schools, is radically unsuitable. The pupils should also have text-books in their hands, and these might be taken as the basis of the oral and illustrative teaching. The text-book will facilitate revisal and reference to principles or facts previously taught, and it will enable pupils who have been absent to study and work up what has been done during their absence. In the absence of text-books abstracts of the lessons have to be written out in notebooks; but this involves a considerable sacrifice of time. Children, moreover, are seldom sufficiently advanced to set the matter out clearly unless it is copied *verbatim* from the blackboard, a plan which involves a great restriction of the time available for teaching. Even college or university students do not trust to the notes of the lectures of their teachers, but habitually consult one or more standard works on the subjects of study. If the same thing were done in our schools we do not doubt that the teaching would be more thorough and fruitful. Wherever such text-books are used by the children their knowledge of the subjects is, as a matter of fact, almost always much more exact and complete. We would earnestly advise all teachers to select a suitable simple text-book on the science subject they mean to teach, and to get their pupils to procure copies for their own use. This does not mean that the chapters of the book are to be merely read, and the matter learned in this way. The teaching will still be oral, illustrative, and as far as possible experimental, and the exposition in the book will be used to secure perfect mastery and possession of what has been thus taught. In the science lessons which we see from time to time questioning on previous lessons is all but wholly neglected. A lesson, we think, might very properly begin with a careful examination on the matter of the previous lesson, and of any other formerly-taught principles that have a direct bearing on the lesson for the day. The common practice of setting a question or two to be answered in writing is no real substitute for the oral examination, for it fails to secure correction of errors for the benefit of the whole class, and cannot serve as a brief lucid recapitulation of the teaching. To make science lessons of real and permanent value better methods of treatment and greater thoroughness of teaching are indispensable. We have been anxious to see the results in this subject at their best, and for this purpose we have very often asked the teachers to conduct the examination in science. But we have seldom found them very ready to undertake this task, and in many cases they must have felt that their teaching did not appear to advantage.

As regards method we are glad to find that there is steady though slow improvement. Many have still to learn that it is the pupils who should do the brunt of the work, and not the teachers. Random talking, and telling what could with a slight exercise of skill be elicited from the pupils, are still much too prevalent. So, too, is failure to impress and emphasize what is taught. But there is little use in commenting on these matters here. We endeavour to point out all faults of this kind to the teachers themselves, and we do not doubt that honest efforts are generally made to amend them.

The order, behaviour, and manners of the pupils, are, as a rule, very satisfactory; but the attention is not always so good as we should like to find it. In some of the classes of the larger schools indifferent attention is very noticeable. This is chiefly due to weakness of government on the part of assistants, but in some of the cases the headmasters cannot be held free from blame, in quietly tolerating what they well know to be hurtful to the interests of their schools. It is their duty to support to the utmost the authority of their assistants at all times, but more especially when they take charge of new classes. If, after due trial, they find the assistants too weak, it is equally their duty to report the state of affairs to the School Committee, that steps may be taken to apply a remedy. More than one of our larger schools have had their efficiency impaired for years, because headmasters have been too good-natured and easy-going to do their duty by making representations in the proper quarter. There has been in recent years a very general improvement in the attention of the infant classes. This is largely owing, we think, to the practice of teaching the classes in smaller drafts, and making the lessons short. The interest of very young children soon flags, and it is a mistake to attempt to sustain it for more than fifteen or, at the outside, twenty minutes.

An impression appears to be gaining ground that the syllabus of study in the public schools induces cram. We are of opinion that there is very little foundation for such a view. In the larger schools, where there is ample time to overtake all that is prescribed, there is clearly no reason why the teaching should not be intelligent and educative in every class. In the smaller schools, and especially in those taught by a single teacher, with an average attendance ranging between thirty-five and fifty, it is difficult to find sufficient time to handle all the subjects in a thoroughly educative manner. In these the work in some of the subjects is apt to be superficial and ill digested. So serious is this danger that we think it highly desirable to lessen the work prescribed for schools of the class specified. This could be easily done—(1) by omitting the history of Standard III.; (2) by giving up all examination in history in the higher standards and simply requiring that the text-book (or part of it) be professed for reading, spelling, and explanation, along with the ordinary reading-books; and (3) by allowing greater freedom in grouping any two consecutive standard classes together in such subjects as grammar, geography, and history. These changes, which would affect but very slightly the range of the teaching and the existing arrangements of the syllabus, would, we think, suffice to eliminate everything that can be justly held as fostering superficial work and cram. While holding these views we are satisfied that a very large part of the undigested work that is met with in our schools is due not to any faults of the syllabus but to very obvious faults in management and teaching. So manifest is this connection that the inspection visit rarely fails to disclose the causes of failure at the examination. In the larger schools, given