

schools the teaching of the class-subjects has declined in efficiency, and in a few some of them have been greatly neglected; but in the great majority of the schools they have received a full share of attention. Should deliberate neglect of one or more of the class-subjects continue, it may become necessary, in the delinquent schools, to enforce a very strict standard in the pass-subjects, for it is obviously unfair to place teachers who neglect certain parts of the school course to concentrate attention on the pass-subjects on a level with those who pay just attention to every subject, and honestly carry out the entire scheme of instruction as laid down by the Minister.

We now offer a few comments on some of the more important subjects of instruction. In the majority of schools, and particularly in the larger ones, reading is usually fluent and accurate, and in a large proportion of them it is marked by intelligence and good expression. In the remainder, though fluency and accuracy are rarely very deficient, absence of natural expression is too prevalent. The teachers of these schools are, for the most part, fully aware of this serious defect, and many of them have taken great pains to remedy it, but with little success. In these cases failure is due not so much to methods as to government, for in no other subject does the teacher's inability to secure the hearty co-operation and ready effort of his pupils reveal itself so quickly or so surely as in reading. Quite in keeping with this is the wonderful transformation in the quality of the reading which is effected, even in a few months, when a teacher of strong governing capacity succeeds one feebly endowed with this gift. From the nature of the case, therefore, inferior reading will continue to be a characteristic of some of our schools; and the number of these will decrease only in proportion to the care taken in the making of appointments to weed out such teachers as have shown themselves wanting in governing capacity.

The inspection visits sometimes disclose a degree of slowness, hesitation, and difficulty in reading that must rob the exercise of anything like interest and pleasure, and make the ultimate attainment of satisfactory fluency and expression a severe and tedious task alike for pupils and teachers. It would be a distinct gain if the causes of this difficulty in dealing with new reading lessons could be laid bare, for those most concerned would then see how to remove them. In our judgment, one of the most potent is the want of a sufficiently extended course of easy and suitable reading in the lower classes, and particularly in the infant classes and in Standards I. and II. The pupils at these stages do not, as a rule, gain a sufficient mastery of the easy words that compose the vocabulary of the books they now read to enable them to readily recognise the same words in new settings and combinations. The remedy for this defect is obvious enough, and it can be easily applied in all schools except the smallest, and even in these without serious difficulty. A wider course of suitable and easy reading should be gone through by the classes below Standard III. In all schools a simple book might well be introduced between the Part II. Primer and the Infant Reader, and another between the Infant Reader and the No. I. Reading-book; and in the larger schools a third reading-book could be largely, if not wholly, overtaken in Standards I. and II. The extended practice of reading thus secured in the lower class would lead to a ready recognition of all the easier words in the higher books, and greatly promote ease and fluency at the higher stages of progress. The work of the infant classes not counting directly in the estimate of the results of the standard examination, teachers are tempted to give the reading of these classes much less attention than it should receive, and this is especially the case when examination time is drawing near. This temptation must be resisted; and, in fact, to yield to it is from every point of view very bad policy. The failure to ground the preparatory classes thoroughly in reading and counting always carries its own revenge, for it involves in the higher stages a laborious grind that disheartens the children and entirely deprives them of the stimulus of consciousness of power in dealing with their lessons. Of course, irregular attendance, and especially the frequently prolonged absence of pupils immediately after the examination, are responsible for some of the difficulty in reading which we are discussing; there is, however, little hope that this serious evil can be mitigated.

In a number of schools it is the custom to read on alternate days the No. I. or No. II. Graduated Reader and the supplementary reading-book corresponding to it. This procedure is open to very serious objection, for the supplementary readers are distinctly more difficult than the Graduated Readers with which they are bracketed, and ought not to be read until the easier books are thoroughly mastered. Later on a revision lesson, once a week or so, in the lower book would suffice to keep up a good knowledge of it. This is a matter we have often mentioned to teachers, but our hints have not always been attended to.

There seems to be a growing feeling among teachers that a better series of reading-books than that at present in use in the district could now be obtained. We think this is true, and that inquiry should be made with a view to the introduction of a better set of readers. It is generally admitted that the graduation of the lower Graduated Readers is far from perfect, and that many of the lessons in the series are less attractive and interesting than could be desired. If the Board should think of taking action in this matter, it would be well to give as long notice as possible of any changes that may be determined on, so that stocks of the books now in use might be disposed of without loss to the booksellers.

In our last report we noted with satisfaction the introduction of vertical writing in some of the schools. In the course of the year there has been a great deal of rash experimenting with this system of writing, which has been suddenly introduced in most of or in all the standard classes in a number of schools. As might be expected, the sudden change has not tended to improvement. Teachers would have acted more wisely had they begun the new style of writing in one or two of the lower classes, and left the higher ones to complete their training in the system to which they were accustomed. In connection with vertical writing, there is a tendency to fall into what is known as "back hand," a style of writing that looks bad and is not easy to read. On the whole, the teaching of writing is not so good as it was some years ago, before drawing made so great a demand on the pupils' time. We should be glad to see the amount of geometrical drawing now