

and expression one book in each standard, varying from about a hundred pages in Standard I. to two hundred pages in Standard VI. Certainly at a few schools two sets of books are used, but we think it very doubtful whether the power acquired in reading at the majority of schools would enable many pupils to read unseen books fairly well, even though such books were only of similar difficulty to those in use. In the lower classes, at all events, so frequently are the same lessons read and re-read, the same words repeated in the same sequence, that on the examination-day the Inspector is listening rather to recitation than to reading. We therefore think that the preparation of two books during the year in each class should be compulsory, and that the Inspector should be at liberty to test reading from both books, but spelling from only one. Then, a wider range of reading should be encouraged by means of school libraries. An excellent step would be for the Board to supply extra sets of Readers to the schools. These would be kept in the schools, and with proper care should last for five or six years. With regard to the faults found in reading at the examinations, indistinct enunciation, showing omission of letters and even syllables, and inaccuracy in small words were the commonest. Then, such faults as dropping and tacking on the aspirate, substituting the intransitive verb "lie" for the transitive verb "lay," and *vice versa*, and reading the past tense for the past participle are gaining a firmer hold year by year. On the other hand, phrasing is gradually improving.

In the comprehension of the subject-matter we are glad to note an improvement. More teachers now endeavour, by suitable illustrations when necessary, to get the pupils to grasp the meanings of phrases and sentences, rather than to simply substitute one word for another.

No subject appears to vary so widely in quality at different schools as dictation and spelling. Considering that both the words for spelling and the passages for dictation are taken from the reading-books in use throughout the year, we think that better results than at present might well be obtained. In Standards I. and II. the subject continues to be good. In Standards III. and IV. carelessness is responsible for a number of errors; and at many schools these classes seldom escape without several members misusing "to," "too," and "two," "there" and "their," "where" and "were," and such-like. Another common error is omitting a syllable, as "pliceman" for "policeman." The habit of making compound words of simple words, as "themselves," "black-board," "play-ground," is very prevalent, and such errors frequently are not corrected by the teachers. While Standards V. and VI. papers were not always free from the careless errors just mentioned, the passages, on the whole, were fairly well written. The isolated words, however, taken from the Readers too often were badly spelled. The errors in these words were not counted against the pupils, as the regulation provides only for the dictation of a passage, so the words were given merely for our own information. As this regulation has now been rescinded, we purpose in future to take the words as well as the passage into consideration when assigning marks, but, as a set-off against this, more errors will be allowed.

To effect an improvement in spelling we would make the following suggestions: There might be less *learning* of spelling, and more actual *teaching* by means of systematic exercises in word-building; clear enunciation of syllables always should be insisted upon, and the word enunciated *before* being spelled (in paper work as well as in oral work) not *after*; transcription should be recognised as an exercise in spelling as well as in writing; correction of all written work should be thorough; and when words are misspelled they should at some future lesson be written correctly, embodied in different sentences of the pupils' own making. With regard to correction of written work, we may say that at our inspection visits we frequently found in the exercise-books glaring errors in spelling passed over. Another matter that needs attention is the training of pupils in reading over carefully what they have written, for not infrequently the passages, though they had been repeated by the teacher four times, did not read sense. The wider reading already recommended would, it is needless to say, tend to improve the spelling.

Writing and drawing are, on the whole, satisfactory subjects. The former naturally is not as good as it used to be, for most of the extra time now required for drawing is taken from it. Drawing, on the other hand, improves year by year, especially Standard IV. geometry and Standard V. scale. In freehand in Standards III. and IV. we frequently had to refuse passes because pupils deliberately measured and ruled their copies. In Standard VI. pupils generally found a difficulty in enlarging, or reducing, in proportion the various parts of the freehand figures. It was very noticeable that pupils who failed badly in drawing often passed excellently in writing, and *vice versa*.

In arithmetic, Standards I. and II. were generally satisfactory classes. Standards III. and IV. varied very much at different schools, while in Standards V. and VI. there were more failures in this subject than in any other. The examination-cards for Standards III. to VI. were, as in the previous two years, issued by the Education Department, and we desire to make a few remarks concerning them. The sets received during different months varied very much in difficulty. Standard III. cards throughout all the sets appeared to us to be on the simple side, more especially as it has been the custom of late years to cover so much ground in the cards for Standard IV. On the other hand, we think that in Standard V. many of the questions in interest and fractions were too difficult; while in Standard VI. those in the commercial rules were, in our opinion, frequently outside "simple cases," as required by the syllabus. The fact of the breakdown in these standards being so universal evidently points to something wrong. Apart, however, from any difficulty in the cards for the higher standards, the questions might well be more in touch with practical life, and, while giving more scope for showing various methods of working, they need not involve so much figuring and large fractional remainders.

The methods of teaching arithmetic, as observed by us on inspection visits, are improving. Still, not enough attention is paid to introducing new rules by many simple illustrative oral examples. The examples in the class-books in use are very well in their way; but they are meant only as examples of procedure for the teacher, who consequently should enlarge upon them considerably. Then, again, examples should be as concrete as possible, so that the pupils may gain correct