

irregular attendance, and we would fain believe that if parents could be made to feel this they would realise their responsibilities and make the necessary sacrifices to render the condition of their school as favourable as possible to the intellectual life of all the children belonging to it. The rigorous enforcement of the compulsory clauses would no doubt do something towards maintaining good attendance; but what is done by compulsion is done unwillingly and with a sense of irritation. Liberty, even liberty to do wrong when he is disposed that way, is dear to the Briton, and to deprive him of it is to excite not his sympathy, but his hostility. We cannot at once compel and enlist sympathetic co-operation, and therefore compulsion should be resorted to only when other and better means have failed. Interest is the most effective weapon with which to combat indifference, and the teacher that succeeds in rousing the interest of parents in the school life of their children does immeasurably more to create a healthy local public opinion and to secure good attendance than can the best machinery devised by the Legislature.

The following table gives, in percentages, the efficiency marks gained by the district in all the subjects of examination:—

## PASS-SUBJECTS.

|          |                                   |          |          |             |              |            |
|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Reading. | Spelling.                         | Writing. | Drawing. | Arithmetic. | Composition. | Geography. |
| 67       | Mean of 1 error<br>per child = 80 | 70       | 70       | 64          | 58           | 66         |

## CLASS AND ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.

|          |          |                             |                       |             |                         |          |             |                     |
|----------|----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|----------|-------------|---------------------|
| Grammar. | History. | Object-lessons,<br>Science. | Mental<br>Arithmetic. | Recitation. | Exercises<br>and Drill. | Singing. | Needlework. | Compre-<br>hension. |
| 57       | 64       | 63                          | 48                    | 66          | 70                      | 56       | 79          | 64                  |

Being percentages of attainable marks, not of mere passes, the figures of this table represent as accurately as numerical statements can do so the actual average efficiency of the schools in the several subjects of examination. The mean efficiency mark for pass-subjects is 68, and that for class and additional subjects 63. The former is nearly good, and the latter stands nearly midway between satisfactory and good. They show conclusively that our schools are, on the whole, in an efficient condition. The general condition of quite a large proportion of them is, in fact, very good, the following criticisms on some of the subjects notwithstanding.

In reading the sight-test was applied throughout the schools, the children failing in this test receiving, as explained elsewhere in this report, a trial in the class reading-books for the year. Reasonable allowance was made for mispronunciation of uncommon or previously unseen words, and for mistakes such as any one might make through failure to grasp the thought on the first reading of a piece. If after reading a sentence the child was conscious of misinterpretation he was allowed to read it again without prejudice to his marks. He was, of course, expected to be able to syllabify, but not to accentuate, all new words of regular sounds. The mean mark earned in this subject shows that much of the reading was good. Naturally the reading of the large schools was generally better than that of the small; still, the latter furnished some of the best reading we heard. The chief defect in the reading, as in the speech of our children, is indistinct articulation. They read indistinctly because they speak indistinctly. Reading is the speaking of another's thoughts, an obvious qualification for which is ability to speak one's own. Hence the teacher who would make reading distinct must begin with the speech of his pupils. With the junior classes there should be mouth exercises, articulation exercises, exercises in the speaking of sentences, and in the recitation of such prose and poetry as lend themselves to dramatic treatment, the aim of the exercises being distinct articulation of single words and groups of words, flexibility of voice, and naturalness of gesture. If these essentials of cultured speech are not acquired in the junior classes they will not be easily acquired in the senior. Errors in articulation frequently pass unobserved owing to the circumstance that teacher and pupils listen to the reading, their eyes all the while on the passage read. To detect such errors they should now and then close their books and merely listen to the reading of the reader. This should be done in all the classes. It is owing to the absence of this ear-test that such errors as most of the following are so common:—

|           |     |              |              |     |               |          |     |             |
|-----------|-----|--------------|--------------|-----|---------------|----------|-----|-------------|
| compny    | for | company.     | famly        | for | family.       | Itly     | for | Italy.      |
| usuly     | "   | usually.     | counslor     | "   | counsellor.   | actuly   | "   | actually.   |
| quitely   | "   | quietly.     | Artic        | "   | Arctic.       | unertook | "   | undertook.  |
| busly     | "   | busily.      | occasionally | "   | occasionally. | espeshly | "   | especially. |
| had sumed | "   | had assumed. | generly      | "   | generally.    |          |     |             |

The law of economy of effort is obviously operating here. In the following we have departure from purity of vowel and diphthong sounds:—

|         |     |         |       |     |         |        |     |        |
|---------|-----|---------|-------|-----|---------|--------|-----|--------|
| fööd    | for | fööd.   | vice  | for | voice.  | thā-ër | for | there. |
| befö-ër | "   | before. | borru | "   | borrow. | hā-er  | "   | hair.  |
| stō-ër  | "   | store.  | bā-ër | "   | bare.   |        |     |        |

Many other examples were noted, but those quoted are sufficient to show how watchful we must be to maintain purity of utterance.

The class reading-book is generally read through in the first seven or eight months of the year. When every paragraph has been read through two or three times the book possesses no further interest for the children, and therefore should be dropped as a reading-book. To cause children to read and read a book until they are word-perfect in it makes the reading not what it ought to be, the most pleasant, but what it ought not to be, the most unpleasant exercise of the day. Nearly every one is alive to this, and most are agreed that something should be done to create in the children a sense of the pleasure to be got out of a book. This cannot be done by reiterated reading of one book. To do it we must have fresh matter, and fresh matter every day. What we