

singing and recitation. But the latter subjects suffer sadly in the preparation. How much might singing and recitation be made to add to the pleasures of school life! They are certainly two of the best means of creating taste, and of giving pleasure; yet how seldom it is that one listens to singing which carries with it the thought that the pupils are being trained in an art, and to recitation that is inspiring and withal beautiful. The proper choice of songs and pieces for recitation, together with the methods of preparing them in school, need much more care and attention from the principal teachers if the children are to advance to higher things when their school life is over. I would mention the Hastings school as illustrating what I mean by training children to sing as an art, and Manga-atua as to the effects of good poetry properly prepared for recitation.

It is always refreshing to me to discover teachers who are not afraid of leaving the old ruts and strike out in new lines of thought for themselves. As a rule, our teachers do not possess much originality in school method. When examining at Napier, however, I was much impressed with the improved tone and widened intelligence of the senior classes. From inquiries I found that quite a new plan had been introduced, with the view of fostering among the pupils a taste for reading good literature. The results were so marked that I asked the master in charge to be good enough to write down for my information the plan he had adopted, and the following is his reply, which I quote in full:—

"I was induced to use the 'unseen' Readers by being struck with the following considerations: (a.) That 25 per cent. of an ordinary Standard VI. can pass in reading as soon as they enter the class, and therefore, after once mastering the meaning and allusions of the set Readers, further going over them is not of much benefit to them. (b.) In large classes most attention has to be given to bad readers, and the good ones have to sit and hear the beautiful thoughts in a poem, or the easily flowing prose, simply murdered. (c.) Above all, in an upper class good reading does not consist in reading a text-book, but in being able to read expressively and intelligently any ordinary reading-book.

"The details of the plan are as follows:—

"(1.) Only the good readers could bring books of their own to read.

"(2.) Any improvement entitled a weak reader to join the silent readers.

"(3.) Each book was brought to me for inspection, and only books with some claim to literary and instructive merit were accepted; only I made one exception: If I saw a pupil was not naturally a lover of reading, I allowed him or her to bring almost anything which interested or amused him, my idea being to encourage reading first, and a choice of better books soon followed.

"(4.) In taking the lesson, I let the class as a whole go on reading, but called on each in turn to read at least a page, and if necessary I would stop the others and let them listen. In this way they saw the varieties of style in different authors, and the corresponding varieties of ways of interpreting these by expression, accent, and modulation.

"5. Nearly every pupil had a dictionary of some sort, and turned up any unintelligible words. Any whose meaning given in the dictionary did not fit in were made a note of, as were any phrases or allusions which the children did not understand. Ten minutes at the end of the lesson sufficed for me to explain these.

"6. One or two children actually could not get a single book from home to read. These I gave a copy of Stead's cheap books, "Ivanhoe," "The Hour and the Man," and the like. The children seeing these books asked me if more could be got, and on showing them the list I got orders for 120 copies of standard books. One of the boys who had no books at home ordered half a dozen.

"The books "Deeds that Won the Empire," and "Fights for the Flag," to which you referred, are in the school library. They are splendidly bound, and were presented by Mr. J. V. Brown. They have been in constant demand during the year."

The preparation of a single reading-book is not conducive to intelligent training. In some schools young pupils can repeat by rote the lessons that are read by their seniors, and when they reach the higher standards the lessons become distasteful in the extreme, by reason of the too frequent repetition. How much better the plan described above! It must be said, also, to the credit of teachers, that the majority of schools in the district use three sets of Readers, one being a literary Reader only, the others being used to assist in the preparation of history and science, or science and geography, under the standard course.

Many of the children within the limits of what is known as the Forty-mile Bush, but which is now for the most part fine grazing country, are placed under some disadvantages compared with other children in the district. Within the past few years quite a number of cheese- and butter-factories have sprung up in the different settlements, and my attention has been called to what teachers term "overpressure," but what seems to me better defined as "overwork," in the case of quite a number of both boys and girls. "Milking cows" is an institution of growing importance, and children become quite as competent as adults in this business. From an incident that took place in one of the bush schools during the progress of my examinations, I was led to make inquiries as to the number of children attending school who milked cows, and in eight schools over which my inquiries extended it appeared that 160 pupils milked 556 cows every morning before starting for school. The majority of the children rise at five, some at half-past four. The ages vary from seven years and nine months to fifteen, and all standards, with the preparatory classes, are represented. The children reside at distances varying from one to four and a half miles from the schools. A few, besides fetching in the cows, milking three, four, or five, as may be, have to take the milk to the factory, return home, get breakfast, walk to school, and reach there in time for the opening! When school is over in the afternoon the same children go through a repetition of the morning toil, and are then supposed to sit down to "home lessons," such as are usually set in the district schools! Thus, the children are really working twelve, and fourteen hours a day. The Factory Acts limit the overworking of young children and