

preparation of time-tables suitable to their circumstances will be no difficult task. If the Department instituted a higher or honours diploma for school method and management it would provide a great stimulus to improvement. As things now stand, no teacher can offer evidence of anything but the lowest equipment in this direction.

The teacher's neglect of adequate preparation for treating the lessons of the day, and of the free use of the blackboard for enforcing explanations and illustrations, and for securing necessary revision, is a matter that can be remedied mainly by pointing out the need and value of these aids to efficient teaching. Their utility is becoming more generally recognised, and only those wedded to a routine, or to some degree indifferent to the best training of their pupils, seriously undervalue them. Too much stress cannot be laid on the need and value of a skilful training in oral answering. Our largest schools have not succeeded in making any very notable improvement in this direction, and one doubts whether their head teachers are sufficiently in earnest about this important matter. A much more satisfactory training is given in a number of the smaller schools. Mr. Grierson, who takes a keen interest in this subject, says, "In the majority of the country schools steady improvement has been made in the quality of the oral answering, and it is now a rare occurrence to find a school in which the pupils have to be exhorted to 'speak out.' In these two points marked and most pleasing advance has been made during the past few years, and is still going on. In the larger suburban schools" (several of which Mr. Grierson examined in the orally answered subjects) "oral answers received from pupils in Standard IV. and upwards were wanting in fullness. Short answers to questions on minute points were readily forthcoming, but full and thoughtful answers showing a grasp of the subject in hand were seldom given." The other Inspectors do not touch upon this topic, which I consider one of the most important that can come under an Inspector's review.

In the larger schools in all parts of the district reading is in general satisfactorily and in some cases well taught. My colleagues show considerable divergence of opinion as to the success with which this and some other subjects of instruction are taught in the rural schools. Of those in the north central district Mr. Mulgan says, "The greater number of the schools I examined failed to show a satisfactory record in this subject." Mr. Grierson (southern and Wairoa districts) finds it "satisfactory on the whole; generally ready, fluent, and accurate." Of the northern district Mr. Purdie says, "In most schools reading ranged from fair to good; in very few cases was it unsatisfactory." In the south-eastern district Mr. Goodwin was "on the whole satisfied with the reading of classes S1 to S4. In Standard V. and Standard VI., though in most cases passable, it was hardly as ready and fluent as it might have been." "In about a third of the schools" examined by Mr. Crowe (south central district), he "found the reading not satisfactory in one or more classes." I have myself seen fewer of the smaller schools than my colleagues, but in those I examined reading was always fair, usually satisfactory, and in some cases good. In most of these small schools some of the pupils of most of the classes were backward, but few classes were destitute of satisfactory or good readers.

The rarity of expressive reading is noted by most of the Inspectors, and this is no doubt a prevalent, though hardly a very weighty, defect. Rhetorical reading appears to many of the young artificial and affected, and much of the difficulty in cultivating a finer style is due to the prevalence and force of this sentiment. Mr. Grierson attributes the want of expression in reading "to the very large amount of unnecessary pattern reading given by most teachers, which not only destroys all originality, but wastes a large part of the already inadequate time available for reading-lessons." He even suggests the forbidding of the simultaneous imitation of pattern reading. Simultaneous reading after a pattern, like any other method, may be badly used, and may also be used when it is out of place. But where well handled I consider it a valuable method for correcting a sing-song or other confirmed bad style in reading, as well as wherever facility of utterance (speech-training) and readiness in recognising the words of the text (eye-training) have to be specially cultivated. Outside these two spheres this method is of little service, and should be sparingly used. It is certainly of little use in refining the sensibility of the ear, which plays the chief rôle in the acquisition of an expressive style of reading.

The pupils of Standard VI. were all tested in the reading of a suitable passage not previously seen, and met the test for the most part with satisfactory success. This ordeal revealed a defect, of which teachers should take note: I refer to a considerable uncertainty in recognising the syllables of and pronouncing words quite new to the pupils. In such circumstances the misplacing of an accent is excusable enough, but there should be no difficulty in recognising the syllables, and giving the grouped letters their normal sounds. The intelligent teaching of the new words met with in the daily recurring new lessons should impart a more thorough training in this.

The comprehension of the language and matter of the reading-lessons receives increasing attention, and continues to improve. In dealing with this the older pupils should be called on to put forth systematically native and original effort. They should be trained to use dictionaries, as well as to undertake careful preparatory study of all new reading-lessons, either at home or at school. The daily brief but effective scrutiny of this preparatory study does not as yet receive the universal attention it deserves and would repay.

Spelling and dictation are, on the whole, well taught, serious weakness being confined to the smaller schools, at which irregular attendance is prevalent. Outside the special dictation exercises, mistakes in the spelling of what ought to be familiar words are still more frequent than seems consistent with the high quality of the special tests. Much of this blundering must be set down to carelessness, but it does not speak well for the habitual checking and correction of ordinary written exercises that such carelessness should be noted by the Inspectors year after year. One seldom sees "grammer," but mistakes in the placing of possessive apostrophes and in the spelling of familiar grammatical terms are by no means unusual. More effective ways of correcting such blunders need to be applied.