

3. The windows must be carried up as near as possible to the ceiling, must not be arched at the top, and must not be "frosted."
4. The windows admitting light from the left must begin as near as possible to the back corner of the room.
5. The walls and ceiling must be so stained as to diffuse the light.
6. Special provision must be made for the illumination of class-rooms from the windows of which the sky is cut off by neighbouring buildings or other objects.
7. Every window must be provided with apparatus whereby the amount of light admitted may be regulated.
8. The room must provide about 15 square feet of floor-space for each child in attendance. Twelve square feet should be the minimum.

These conditions are not satisfied by our own schools, and much less are they satisfied by the schools I visited in Australia.

In South Australia and Victoria, to the discomfort of bad light is added the discomfort of seats so constructed as to afford no rest for the backs of the children, who sit all day and every day on the same narrow seats, in the same bent attitudes, and with eyes strained to the utmost to see their own work and that of their teacher. Many of our own schools have serious faults of lighting; but they all provide back-rest for the children during all lessons that do not involve writing. Like the Australians, we have our long rooms, but none so long as theirs.

I am entirely opposed to long class-rooms in which the pupils sit facing the long side; for in the first place it is almost impossible to light them properly, and in the next the pupils sitting on the extreme left or right have a difficulty in hearing the teacher and in seeing, without undue fore-shortening, what he writes or draws on the blackboard. For lighting, seeing, and hearing, the best form is the oblong, with aisles running the long way of the room. A room 30 ft. by 25 ft. is now considered the best type of room for teaching purposes. Such a room, if well ventilated, would provide accommodation for an average of about sixty-five pupils, the maximum number a teacher should be asked to teach.

A feature that strikes a visitor to the South Australian schools is the decoration of the walls with good well-framed pictures, all bought with money raised locally, and generally by school concerts, for which preparation was made out of school hours. In Victoria, decoration of the brick schools is out of the question, for the walls, being unplastered, are not unlike those of a barn.

In Australia the head teacher is not, as with us, provided with a residence or a rent allowance; but, where there is a residence, he is charged rent whether he occupies it or not. The residences I saw are greatly inferior to those of Otago. In Adelaide, for example, I visited a school of 800 pupils, the head teacher of which is provided with a house of five rooms, for which he has to pay a rent of £30 a year. Some of the country residences I saw are unworthy of the name "residence"; they are properly denoted by the term by which they are sometimes officially known, "quarters," and they possess all the qualities connoted by that ugly term. One would think that the Education Departments had gone out of their way to belittle their teachers in the eyes of those among whom they send them to live. Great State Departments seem to have in them very little of the spirit of humanity.

In Victoria the syllabus of instruction is very much like our own; and, except in English and, perhaps, in arithmetic, in which the work is more mechanical than with us, the quality of the teaching compares favourably with ours. Our English is not good; but it is, I think, much better than that of the Australian States I visited. In our junior classes we read much more and thus lay a wider foundation for the senior classes to build upon, and in none of the classes do we adopt the simultaneous method of the Victorian schools. There, in all the schools in which I saw reading-lessons given, the teacher reads a paragraph, then the class read it in concert, then individual pupils were called upon to read it—a method designed, one would think, not to stimulate mental activity, but to produce mental stagnation; for it imposes upon the children only an effort of imitation—the reproduction of the teacher's pronunciation of the words and his interpretation of the thought of what is read: the children are parrots and nothing more. The method is bad because it does not put the pupils on their mettle, does not afford them the opportunity of grappling with and overcoming the difficulties of pronunciation and interpretation, does not develop power, or only the power of imitation. The "result system" has no doubt tended to make teachers follow the lines of least resistance, and this may account for the adoption of the method I am condemning. In the other States more of the work was thrown upon the pupils; but help was too readily given in cases of difficulty, and hardly anything was done to make the children realise the thought before attempting to read the writer's expression of it. In some of the Victorian infant-rooms I saw good work done by the "Quincy method," a method that might well be combined with our own phonic method.

As with us, the children of the Australian States work up with great thoroughness the spelling of their reading-books, cramming into their minds the forms of the words while paying little attention to the content of them. It is the content, not the form, of a word that is of value; and it is my opinion that the pupil should possess himself of the content before he is asked to write the form. Spelling is part of the mechanism of written speech and is, or ought to be, taught for purposes of written speech. It is obvious that we cannot use in composition words the meaning of which we do not know. There is no doubt in my own mind that in the common school we give too much time to the forms of words and too little to their meanings. We make spelling the bugbear of the child's school life. What can be more uninteresting to any one than learning forms the meanings of which he does not know?

Composition is a department of English in which the Otago schools are, I think, greatly in advance of the Australian schools, where, if I may judge from what I saw, this subject is treated in a very perfunctory manner. I examined many exercises and tested several classes, but could