

accented. Such matters as Mr. Purdie here points out show us the urgent need of a training-college for teachers. Considerable numbers of them have but a humble conception of what the teacher's aims should be. They deem it enough, for example, if children at the end of a year can read a particular book or couple of books: whether the teaching has been so handled as to train and develop the power of reading similar matter that has not been seen before is but little considered. The Inspectors do what they can to remedy such evils, and their exertions are by no means futile, but a sound course of training at the outset of a teacher's career would be more effective, and would largely prevent the acquisition of bad habits and low aims that may be difficult to correct later on.

In the larger schools the Standard VI. pupils on the whole acquitted themselves creditably in reading passages of prose previously unseen. In the smaller this, the only true test of the effective teaching of reading, was much less successfully dealt with, and a good few pupils had to be absolutely failed for the Sixth Standard because of inferior reading. It should be clearly understood that pupils who cannot read an easy passage of prose that has not been seen before cannot be passed for Standard VI.

The comprehension of the matter and language of the reading-lessons shows considerable improvement, though our teachers but rarely attain any high degree of skill in dealing with this point. During the year the pupils of the higher standard classes have been asked to write out on paper the meaning of a few uncommon words, and the sense of a phrase or short sentence of some difficulty, in addition to the brief oral questioning that accompanies the hearing of reading. This practice will be continued, as it has quickened among teachers a sense of their shortcomings, and promises to stimulate their efforts for improvement. Written tests of this kind are in their sphere of great value, for they show teachers, and pupils too, in a clear and definite way how delusive and disappointing is much that wears the guise of satisfactory oral answering.

Spelling continues to be carefully and efficiently taught. Errors in spelling familiar words in composition and other written exercises still show some want of careful attention among pupils, as mistakes are rarely made in the same words in dictation exercises.

The teaching of writing is on the whole satisfactory. In the larger schools it is in general efficiently and in a good many cases well taught, and the great majority of the written papers given in at the annual examinations showed neat and careful writing, though it was by no means always in the copy-book style. Mr. Mulgan is the only Inspector who reports unfavourably on the teaching of this subject. "In the majority of the schools examined," he says, "the work was not satisfactory, though in some of the schools it was well done." The meagre rate of improvement in this subject in the smaller schools is doubtless mainly due to the inefficient supervision of penmanship in other written exercises than those done in copy-books. It is not, however, altogether a question of want of attention and care on the part of the teachers. The contrast in quality between the general writing and the copy-book writing must be largely due to the different rate of speed at which the two exercises are habitually done. General written exercises are, it may be, too rapidly written to be well done, but commonly enough the ordinary exercises in copy-books are too slowly written. Two copy-books are filled in twelve months, and rarely more. I consider that the majority of the pupils should be able to do much more than this in that time. In most schools all the pupils in a class are made to write at the same rate. There is no real occasion for this; pupils who show freedom in writing might well be allowed, and indeed encouraged, to go on at their own pace, without waiting for the whole class to keep up with them. As things are, we get pretty good but decidedly slow writing in copy-books, along with more rapid but inferior writing in other exercises. Would it not be a gain if we sacrificed something in the style of the copy-book writing for speed, and for the general improvement in all written exercises that should follow from assimilating the speed of writing in copy-books and in other exercises? In any case, a cardinal aim in the teaching of writing should be the acquisition of reasonable quickness and freedom in the exercise. In a good many of the larger schools these are even now fairly well attained.

"I am sorry," Mr. Grierson writes, "that I cannot express any great amount of satisfaction with the teachers' efforts to carry out their instructions with regard to the teaching of writing. The correct writing posture and the holding of the pen do not receive the attention they deserve." Few of our teachers, as far as I can judge, succeed in training their pupils to habitually hold the pen properly. Considering how good the discipline of the schools generally is, this fault must be attributed to virtual indifference on the part of teachers. I have made special efforts to rouse them to a sense of the importance of these matters, and cannot but regret that I have not been more successful. So long as our pupils are allowed to let the pen-handle rest in the hollow between the thumb and the palm, to place the first finger opposite to or farther back on the holder than the thumb, to let the thumb and the first finger touch each other on the pen-holder, and to let the forearm hang unsupported in air, freedom and flexibility in using the pen cannot be secured, and a slow, stiff, cramped style of writing will be acquired. The acquiescence in these faults that comes under an Inspector's notice almost daily is deplorable. In dealing with this matter few head teachers do their full duty.

Drawing from the flat is efficiently taught in the great majority of the schools, and the geometrical drawing of Standards IV., V., and VI. is in general satisfactory. The slate drawings from copies put on the blackboard have been creditably done in most of the larger schools. In Standards I., II., and III. the teaching of geometrical figures is too exclusively dogmatic. Actual comparison of the sizes of angles and the length of lines is rarely attempted, and pupils are generally quite unable to use a pair of compasses or a sheet of paper folded to a proper angle, to measure or compare the sizes of different angles, *e.g.*, to demonstrate that a right angle is greater than an angle of 60 degrees, or that the adjacent angles of a rhomboid are of unequal size. The figures to be studied can, however, be correctly drawn to dictation, and satisfactory definitions