

lowest grades of schools, those below grade 5, and especially those with an average of between thirty and forty, the infants are likely to fare badly unless a strenuous and methodical effort is made by the teacher to use the material at his command. The Board has been almost lavish in granting supplies to help the teacher of this class of school—material consisting of plasticine, crayons, bricks, and sticks has been supplied—and yet we have not unfrequently found the material untouched. To the question, “Why?” such answers as “want of time,” “want of knowledge,” &c., revealed a lack of interest quite inexcusable. If the matter cannot be viewed from the position of the scholar, it might be from that of the teacher. Surely for his own sake, if not for the sake of the pupil, this work is worth taking in hand. In striking contrast to this attitude is that of those who find in the material supplied the solution of the great difficulty of planning a suitable time-table for the little ones, who from the nature of the case must for a good part of the day be left to themselves.

In composition, both oral and written, a great step forward has been taken; but many teachers have not yet realised the great possibilities that may be developed in the very early stage. The principle we are making towards is this: that the written expression of ideas should commence as soon as a child begins to know words, or as soon as it begins to be able to write the symbols for sounds, and so make up words. Even those teachers who are using the “word and sentence” method of teaching reading fail to realise that an important part of this method is the use in sentences composed by the pupils themselves of the words learned in the reading-lesson. That is to say, composition is an integral part of the method. Reading, writing, and composition go hand in hand. It is just here that the realm of the unexplored lies—the undiscovered country to many teachers—and the call is, “Go forward and take possession of it.”

In the upper primer classes the place of composition is now sufficiently recognised and many of the pupils showed considerable facility in writing on the subjects we allotted to them. The teachers are unanimous in this, that the scholars take keen interest in expressing themselves in writing; and in this also, that the written and the oral composition in the very early stages furnish the very best means at the teacher’s command for becoming acquainted with the mispronunciations, mis-spellings, and wrong impressions of individual pupils.

It is one of the rare treats of an Inspector’s life to go into an infant room where the little ones are being trained from the very day of entering school to say what they have to say in clear and distinct tones and in a succession of sentences.

THE WORK OF THE STANDARDS.—We do not propose this year to enter into a detailed criticism of the various subjects or to make a comparison of the progress made in the different standards. Many of our teachers have striven earnestly to bring their methods into line with a higher test than that of mere examination; they have endeavoured to give reality to their teaching; they have endeavoured to lead the pupils to an intelligent mastery of the facts brought before them; they have sought to extend their own knowledge in directions where it was found lacking; they have shown themselves receptive of new ideas; they have turned to good account the opportunities afforded them of learning more about their work, its methods and ideals, and the material with which they work. So much we can say without reservation, and there is little need to say more. When the work of teaching falls into hands of willing, enthusiastic, and open-minded men and women, the task of criticism gives place to the much more pleasant and agreeable one of pointing out still better ways, new paths to progress. Moreover, much criticism is at the present juncture undesirable, even if it were necessary. It is the word of encouragement that comes appropriately just now. Troubled and almost baffled as many have been with the new demands of a very full and very suggestive syllabus, dismayed by their own deficiencies in the face of the new methods suggested, it would be out of place for us to say anything that might discourage. The work many have so strenuously done this year will make next year’s task less heavy, and the careful preparation made with many misgivings will pave the way for more confident future effort.

True we can find those in our ranks who make light of serious preparation for their daily work. There always is and always will be the annoying minority who do not realise the tremendous responsibilities they, as teachers, have undertaken; people who take pleasure in seeing their work through at the earliest possible moment in the afternoon, and who take care to begin at the latest legal minute in the morning. Unfortunately some of our young teachers have shown symptoms of this perfunctory habit—worst of all maladies in a profession, which, as we have said before, calls for the exercise of the highest powers of work and devotion. If this paragraph happens to catch their eye, which is very doubtful, we would in all earnestness ask them to mend their ways, or end their days as teachers, falsely so called, and find their way into some avenue of life where half-hearted and spasmodic service may be productive of less harm.

We have made a very strenuous endeavour to break away from the stereotyped form of examination and inspection. We feel that intelligent and thoughtful teaching is inseparably bound up with intelligent and thoughtful methods of examination. Many teachers, however, are too much inclined to remember the details of the Inspector’s examination, and to model their methods of teaching accordingly, while they ignore the broad principles underlying these details. Thus, in seeking to emphasize the importance of practical work in geography, the examiner deals somewhat fully with, say, the keeping of weather calendars, and the next year the teacher pays special attention to this and ignores the importance of practical work in other parts of the subject. If this is to be the result of examinations, then far better that they should be abolished altogether. Nothing must come between the teacher and his supreme task of developing the intelligence of his scholars. A summary of the points upon which stress was laid will indicate the lines along which the examinations in the main were conducted.

1. *Free Oral Expression upon Familiar Subjects in every Class in the School.*—We have tried to set as an aim before ourselves and before our teachers that pupils should at every opportunity be encouraged to give in continuous form a description of that about which they have been learning or which they