

important than the forms, and ignorance of the meaning and use of a word should be regarded as a more serious defect than ignorance of its form. Whatever the study may be, without the ideas represented the words representing them go for very little; they are at best dead knowledge, mere lumber that the mind, finding no use for it, refuses to retain. The time wasted in spelling-drill is lamentable. Half of it would, we believe, produce better results, even in spelling, if the children were first trained to use the words in spoken speech, then to look intently at their forms, and finally to use them in written speech. Notwithstanding its perversity, the spelling of English gives little trouble to those who have something to say, and are accustomed to say it adequately in writing. If the children could use the words of their reading-books half as well as they can spell them it would be an immense gain to the intellectual and emotional life of the schools. We are all to blame—the public, Education Department, Inspectors, teachers (the last least of all), for we have failed to realise the true relation of spelling to expression.

Dictation as a means of learning the arts of composition is too little practised, the exercise being generally regarded simply as a test in spelling, and the children being required to think of nothing but the accurate reproduction of the words and stops dictated by the teacher. No mental exercise is of much value that does not make the mind work hard, and a dictation exercise that does not compel the pupils to consider the meaning and logical connection of the parts of what is dictated does not make it work hard. To make it an intellectual exercise in the orderly expression of consecutive thought the passage should be dictated without punctuation and without suggestion of punctuation, and the children thereafter set to use their imagination and reason to discover, first, where the main statements begin and end, and the relation of the statements to each other as principal units in the expression of the matter of the passage; and, second, the relation of the subordinate parts of their principals. They should then put capitals and stops in accordance with their analysis of the thought, compare their own work with that printed in the book, and try to discover the reason for the difference (if any) between their own interpretation and that of the author of the passage, the teacher meanwhile passing round and helping where he finds need for it. Constant practice of this kind would keep spelling in touch with the expression of thought, develop taste and feeling for good literary structure, induce capacity for sustained and connected thought, and lay a sound foundation for original composition and literary appreciation.

The efficiency mark for composition is low, and low it will remain until we set ourselves a higher ideal of what constitutes adequate self-expression in both oral and written speech, and realise more fully the factors that make for its attainment. What are the essential factors? They are matter, language, and form—that is, something to say, language with which to express it adequately, and knowledge of the forms in which the language must be cast to express it in accordance with English idiom. Matter is not to seek; it is furnished by experience and by every subject of the school course, and it is not lacking in the children. Language, however, is often lacking, lacking because little serious effort is made to acquire it; and grammar or form is nearly what the Department intended it to become in the schools—namely, dead as a door-nail. If the question of form is considered at all by the children, it is generally determined not by reason, but by feeling or by guessing. This we know from the circumstance that not one in ten of them can explain why one form is right and another wrong, one faulty and another faultless. They have no body of positive knowledge of form to enable them to determine rationally between the claims of competing forms of expression, and are therefore reduced to the plight of guessing when they have to make a choice. They ought not to be reduced to this condition of impotence, and that they are is due partly to the invertebrate character of the syllabus of composition and partly to the standard and kind of work set by the Department in the composition-cards it has allowed to be scattered broadcast over the Dominion. Teachers, and especially inexperienced teachers, are naturally prone to follow the Department's lead, and in this case its lead is, in our opinion, a very bad one. To us it is an ugly fact that the children leave our schools deplorably ignorant of the grammar of their mother-tongue.

In Standards I, II, and III arithmetic is generally good, and sometimes excellent; in Standard IV it is generally fair; but in Standard V and Standard VI it is often weak, and seldom good. The test questions for Standard III to Standard VI are drawn and issued by the Department. Those for Standard IV to Standard VI are, very properly, so drawn as to test the children's intelligence, and seldom involve difficulties that can reasonably be regarded as beyond the capacity of well-instructed pupils of average ability. Nevertheless, they year by year prove stumbling-blocks to a large proportion of the children. The subject is certainly well presented by the teachers, whose illustrations, expositions, and blackboard demonstrations ought to be convincing to every one able to interpret the language used and possessing explicit knowledge of the principles involved in the reasoned steps of the work. Ability to interpret the language and explicit knowledge of the principles are precisely the equipment that is wanting in many pupils, who are therefore unable to contribute their share to the argument developed by their teachers. They, like ourselves, see in a thing what they bring to see in it, neither more nor less; and, if they are unable to bring right mental images of the things symbolized by the words of what is set for solution and of the effect of arithmetical operations on the quantities involved, they can profit little even from the best of presentations. Clear mental vision of things in their quantitative relation, and of the effect of arithmetical operations on this relation, is the condition of sound work in arithmetic, and without it the subject is devoid of culture-value—that is, does not yield a training in interpretation and orderly reasoned expression. From the point of view of culture the answer is of no importance whatever, and therefore the dominating thought in the child's mind ought ever to be not "What rule shall I apply to get the answer?" but "What is the meaning of the question, and how can I best express my conception of it, and order the steps by means of which I can offer an intelligently expressed solution?" Many of us have yet to realise that the study of arithmetic is