

schemes of instruction in such subjects as nature-study, English, and geography without assistance. Needless to say, this is contrary to both the letter and the spirit of all regulation and authority, for unless work throughout the classes is carefully correlated, unless each step taken by each class has some definite objective, teaching effort tends to dissipate and lose much of its vigour and effect. It is also a matter of keen regret that so large a proportion of teachers fail, year after year, to purchase any book or periodical that would tend to broaden their outlook or to infuse them with the spirit of their profession. If teachers desire teaching to be regarded as a profession they must do as other professional men—doctors, lawyers, musicians, engineers—they must keep themselves acquainted with the opinions of the best authorities in their profession. To drop studies after leaving training college or university is a thing no other professional man could afford to do.

*Periodical Examination.*—We regret that it has become necessary again to refer to this matter, but its importance and the knowledge that our remarks of last year still apply demand that we should do so. The regulations for the inspection of public schools do not require more than two periodical examinations to be held during the course of the year, so that the amount of labour involved in setting questions, marking papers, and gauging progress generally has been considerably lessened. Under the circumstances it is not unreasonable to expect such careful attention to detail in the conduct of the examination as will enable the results to become a real help to teachers in determining promotions, and a real guide to Inspectors in estimating the progress of the school; and yet in a large number of our small schools we find that the teachers' examination tests fail to bring out obvious weaknesses, that written work is carelessly corrected, and that an unduly low standard is set up in the award of marks.

Nor is this our only complaint: we not infrequently find that results of examinations fail to appear in the special registers supplied, and that the pupils' answers to the questions set have been either lost or destroyed. Periodical tests are most necessary in order to supply information for Inspectors, teachers, and pupils, but to this end they must be carefully and intelligently conducted, and the results must be accurately and systematically recorded. A carelessly conducted examination is worse than useless, and it may become positively misleading to all concerned, and give rise to results highly detrimental to school progress. It is our intention to make the matter of these examinations a subject of special inquiry during our visits to the schools.

*Schemes of Work.*—In general these show some improvement. In the large or efficient school the schemes submitted give evidence of thoughtful preparation and appreciation of approved ideals, and in the smaller schools teachers are gradually learning to value the importance of forecast and co-ordination. Amongst the subjects whose treatment is least satisfactory we may mention oral composition and word-building. The former subject should occupy a much more prominent place in the work of the preparatory classes, Standard I, and Standard II than sometimes obtains. It is not unusual to find that subjects for oral composition are taken haphazard, and are practically without connection with other school-work. The scheme of things which enters into the child's life outside the class-room must not be overlooked, but equally important are the details of work within the schoolroom. A most interesting and useful scheme, providing for a full year's course, could readily be evolved, having reference to nature-study, history stories and legends, geography stories, moral and health instruction, and some elementary facts of civic life. A large number of schools are satisfied with word-building schemes quite unworthy of the efforts of trained teachers, schemes in which we look in vain for underlying principle and definite aim. A scheme such as that outlined in Blackie's Systematic Reading-books would be a great improvement on many of those at present submitted. It should be noted that liberty of choice is a prominent feature of the syllabus, and that Inspectors will welcome originality and variety in the arrangement and treatment of courses of instruction.

*Time-tables.*—We would draw attention to the need for the due and accurate observance of the time-table. On the occasion of the Inspector's visit frequent references to the time-table and actual departure from time-table details indicate a want of familiarity with the document. We should point out, what obviously all teachers should realize, that the time-table when once fixed should be adhered to. "The time-table is the second school clock," and should indicate with accuracy the daily record of school progress. Pupils have a right to expect that its details be respected, and Inspectors are unable to form just opinions of existing conditions if its strict observance cannot be assumed.

*Reading and Recitation.*—On the whole reading has shown some improvement upon the work presented last year. It is unusual now to find pupils in the upper classes who cannot read previously unseen tests of a suitable character fluently and accurately, but it is doubtful whether many of the pupils are able to comprehend the gist of an ordinary passage sufficiently well after once reading it to reproduce it intelligently in their own words. The application of this test frequently brought disappointing results. Some allowance must, of course, be made for the natural diffidence displayed by most boys and girls in expressing themselves orally in continuous sentences, but they should be encouraged to summarize orally and in writing the substance of their reading-lessons. Frequently too much attention is bestowed upon mechanically accurate reading, which, after all, is of secondary importance to the ability to grasp and understand the thought and purpose of the writer. Sufficient use is not yet made of silent reading—of reading to gain information. It is this type of reading that the pupils will use most when they take up the wider and more responsible duties that await them outside the schoolroom. The necessity of training their pupils to reproduce in their own words what they read—to summarize, to criticize, and in some measure to form individual opinions—cannot too frequently or too strongly be impressed on our teachers. In many schools reading is now taught from the script, and an effort is being made to shorten the time usually occupied by the primers in learning to write sentences. While reading is usually quite satisfactory in fluency and correctness of enunciation and pronunciation, and is often rendered with pleasing emphasis and expression, poetry or