

confidence of the infants should be the teacher's first care, and where other means fail even toys and picture-books will afford opportunities for the indication of individual preferences, and may be made a source of profit as well as pleasure.

*School Buildings and Grounds.*—The interest in the school precincts is becoming stronger year by year, and it is a very rare occurrence to see paper-littered grounds. The efforts of the teachers have been well supported by the parents, who are becoming more aware of the physical and mental importance of the playing-ground. It is pleasing to find that in the newer districts ample provision has been made for playing-spaces, and that efforts are being made to have the grounds laid out in a systematic manner. Shelter-pavilions have been provided in many places, and have been largely utilized for open-air teaching. The majority of the school buildings are in a satisfactory condition. Those more recently erected make excellent provision for the comfort and health of the teachers and children. Several of the rooms of older type have been renovated, partitioned, and provided with improved ventilation, making teaching-conditions more comfortable. Much still remains to be done in the direction of remodelling old buildings and providing better cloak and lavatory accommodation.

*Quality of Instruction.*—(a.) Reading : It is pleasing to note that in an increasing number of our schools every encouragement is given to the pupils to make their course of reading as wide as possible. Continuous readers are largely used, and school libraries are increasing in number. The result must be to widen the mental outlook and to quicken the general intelligence. Enunciation, too, has received more attention; and though there are still some teachers who in this particular fail to do their duty either by example or precept, yet there is no doubt that a substantial improvement has been effected. An intimate connection exists between clear articulation and clear thought—a fact often not sufficiently recognized. The syllabus stresses the importance of correct speech, and it should be the aim of every teacher by systematic effort to secure clear articulation and pure vowel-sounds.

(b.) Recitation : In recitation, too, an honest effort has been made to encourage a taste for good poetry. In those cases where a mere parrot-like repetition of rhythmical passages still continues it is generally found that the teachers responsible have neither love for it nor interest in the subject. They are chiefly concerned with satisfying the demands of the syllabus as to quantity, and neglect the opportunities offered for educational training of enormous value.

(c.) English and Composition : These subjects continue to show a wide range of values. In many of our schools S2 pupils do better work than would have been accepted a few years ago as a pass in S3. For this improvement skilful teaching in the infant classes, and the increasing importance attached to the subject of oral composition, are chiefly responsible. While making full allowance for differences in individual capacity and for limitation of personal experience incidental to environment, pupils are too often blamed for the teacher's shortcomings; and cases are by no means rare of one teacher securing excellent results from material regarded by his predecessor as "impossible." From the time a pupil first enters the school the principle of interest should be a guiding one. At every stage encouragement should be given to the free verbal expression of ideas; oral composition in correlation with every phase of the school-work should be made wide use of, and an honest attempt should be made to cultivate the habit of mental picturing in connection with reading, recitation, &c. Where, however, especially in the primer stages, a policy of repression rather than of encouragement has prevailed, and where through ignorance or indifference opportunities for language-teaching have been neglected, it is not to be wondered at that the difficulties attending the teaching of this subject in the upper classes should at times appear almost insuperable.

(d.) Arithmetic : In this subject, though on the whole satisfactory, there is good ground for suggesting that more prominence should be given to practical work and mental calculations. There is need for speeding up and accuracy, and with this in view very much more might be done by the adoption of shorter methods. In the solution of written examples methods utilized in mental work are often studiously avoided. In the interpretation of the language of problems there is room for improvement, some of the errors found on examination-day giving a very poor impression of the intelligence and mental grasp of the pupils. Although in the preparatory classes as a rule the composition of numbers is creditable, there are still too many who fail "to perform mentally and orally every kind of operation, and to apply the power thus acquired to concrete examples." Practical arithmetic, by bringing the subject within the child's range of interest, increases the effectiveness of the teaching, and we are pleased to note the efforts of some teachers in the direction of the correlation of arithmetic with drawing and handwork. With the excellent handbooks available there is no excuse for out-of-date methods.

(e.) Geography : Satisfactory attention is paid to this subject, and the majority of teachers show an intelligent grasp and application of its principles. Where such a course is practicable the children should be led to make their own personal observations with regard to such elementary physiographical facts as the immediate neighbourhood of the school allows, but greater importance might at times be attached to the intimate relation existing between these and the human activities of the district. We would again stress the importance of the use of sketch-maps drawn by the teacher and the pupils in close co-operation. Such maps are most helpful at every stage of the child's progress.

(f.) History : Instruction in this subject gives results of an uneven and too often disappointing nature. It is only in a moderate number of schools that history can be regarded as well taught. The lack of success in many cases appears to be due to the fact that the child takes a very small part in the lesson, which unfortunately becomes a mere lecture: information is doubtless imparted, but the knowledge of the child is not increased, nor are opportunities afforded for skilful use of the child's intellectual activities. The lessons on civics are generally of a more successful character, although there is just a tendency to stress the importance of lessons on civic institutions to the exclusion of those on civic obligations—good manners and good habits. In connection with history and civics, as well as in geography, a fuller correlation with oral and written composition would afford means of crystallizing the pupil's ideas.