

the poetry course in some chronological way. It is, of course, impossible to read Macaulay without picking up interesting and valuable information. He bristles with references. In his mention of Addison's European travels, he refers to a dozen or more Latin writers, one or two French and a few Italians. Genoa and its doges, the cathedral of Milan, the carnival at Venice; at Rome—St. Peters, the Pantheon, Holy Week, the Appian Way; these are a few general references picked up in a hurried glance through the essay. A stu-

dent with any curiosity in his mental make-up can hardly fail to acquire some information of considerable interest.

The novel, "Silas Marner, I shall not touch upon. All told, the new course, while not more difficult than the old, seems to have the merit of allowing and encouraging profitable excursion into a broader study of English literature. This is, I think, a very valuable quality and one that entitles the course to a fair trial.

COMPOSITION DIFFICULTIES

By Ruby Riddell, Souris, Man.

It seems to me that a teacher can spend more time and anxious thought on Composition, and have more discouragements in this subject, than in any other on the curriculum. On the other hand, to find that a class is making real progress, is learning to speak and write easily and effectively, gives probably more satisfaction to the teacher than to find progress along any other line.

It is not worth while spending time discussing the value of Composition. Many argue that it cannot be taught—that faulty expression is merely a symptom of internal disease. The latter is certainly true to a large degree. What is the use of insisting on correct paragraph and sentence structure, for instance, if the pupil's thinking is at fault? It has been said that many of the great masters did not have an opportunity to study composition. Perhaps not, but they were endowed with the gift of clear and orderly thinking. They had a great message to give to the world, and knew what they wanted to say so well that it could not be otherwise than logically arranged at least. Clear thinking would paragraph it for them without conscious effort.

The general public today blames the school for the poor English of the average boy and girl. The school blames the home training—so there you are. However, because of the practical need in after life, there is an increasing demand everywhere for greater efficiency in both oral and written composition, and the public looks to the school to supply this demand, so it is our duty as teachers of English to give our best efforts to the problem and make the Composition period something more than a mere formality.

I suppose the difficulties I have met with are those of the average teacher:—(1) Lack of interest, (2) Faulty paragraphing, (3) Technical errors, such as misplaced modifiers, faulty participial constructions, careless punctuation and grammatical errors in general.

In dealing with the first, I have often blamed myself. Very often I find that poor essays are the result of vagueness of knowledge, which means inevitably little enthusiasm, and so I try now to give the best part of a composition period to the assignment of a

topic, taking plenty of time to discuss the matter with the class, let them ask questions, and tell them, if necessary, exactly where they can find material. Without being full of ideas on a subject, how can a pupil be expected to say anything worth while or be in the least enthusiastic over it? It is not well to take for granted a pupil's knowledge on even everyday subjects. Over a year ago I asked a class to write on "Edith Cavell," and was surprised and disappointed at the poor results. Practically none had sufficiently definite information to write anything worth while. I then wrote to different newspapers asking for back numbers of papers with material on this subject. The Montreal Witness was particularly generous in response, sending me several marked papers. I read these and other articles to the class, and this time got satisfactory results. I find that any amount of trouble I take along this line is well repaid. It is worth while, too, to study the interests of the pupils and try to get as great a variety of topics as possible. Above all, the teacher must be interested in, not bored by the subjects which are interesting to the class. The enthusiasm of the teacher is a great factor in the success of the average essay, as her attitude is so often reflected in the pupils.

I think one reason why so many pupils dislike writing compositions is because they are not "real"—they do not seem to arise from an actual need in life. So often one might "pretend"—make the work arise from a real situation. The pupils will enter into it with real enthusiasm now that they have a motive, and will often show great energy and initiative. For example, have the class write letters to an absent pupil. There will then be no difficulty in finding material or arousing interest. This winter I have tried the experiment of having my classes write to pupils of schools in Ontario, United States, England and New Zealand, and I must say that the freshest, most original work in Composition I have ever received from some pupils was in these letters. Some answers have been received already and the class is quite eager to write again.