

an interpretation in other counties has led to serious embarrassment and complaint on the part of parents and others. While the Department holds that the regulations should be interpreted as they read, yet it will be happy to act, as far as possible, upon the advice and recommendation of Inspectors in all doubtful cases, where the regulations cannot be carried out, and the circumstances of the locality would warrant a temporary suspension of them; but it is not competent for an Inspector to authorize a departure from the regulations without the sanction of the Department."

STUDY OF HIGHER ENGLISH IN THE SCHOOLS.

(In connection with the new High School Programme.)

On the introduction of higher English into our schools, J. M. Buchan, Esq., M.A., Inspector of High Schools, has addressed the following letter to the Rev. G. P. Young, M.A., Chairman Central Committee of Examiners. We insert it for the information of all parties concerned, and commend it to their consideration. Mr. Buchan says:—

"In consequence of the action which the Council of Public Instruction has lately taken, in order to promote the study of higher English, you recently requested me to put into a shape fit for publication, any information or advice which I might deem it judicious to give, in regard both to the way in which the prescribed poems and prose writings should be studied, and to the particular editions which would be most suitable. It is difficult to treat the former of these subjects in a satisfactory manner within the brief compass of a letter; but, as the Committee are of opinion that there are a great many teachers and students who will welcome even the slightest indication of the path which they ought to pursue, I shall write a few paragraphs on the topics on which information is most likely to be sought or needed. I shall, besides, give the names of any suitable editions of the works prescribed which have fallen under my observation.

"At the beginning of this year the study of English Literature, as distinguished from that of the History of English Literature, is to be introduced in the Normal and High Schools. Candidates for first-class certificates are to read 'Macbeth,' 'Il Penseroso,' ten Essays from the 'Spectator,' and Johnson's Lives of Milton and Addison; pupils in the higher department of the High Schools are to read 'Macbeth' and 'Il Penseroso,' and pupils in the lower department are to read the 'Lady of the Lake' and Gray's 'Elegy.' Of these three classes of pupils, the first two approximate sufficiently in regard to knowledge, mental training, and ripeness of intellect, to render it advisable that they should be taught in the same way. The third class of pupils will require to have the method of instruction adapted to their less mature years.

"It is impossible, and were it possible, it would not be desirable, to lay down a set of rules for the guidance of teachers in teaching the works named in the preceding paragraph, which would meet the case of every teacher and of every class. Not only do teachers differ in their mental constitution, not only do classes vary in ability, thoroughness of training, and in other respects, but the selections to be read differ in length, in subject, in form, and in character. Some are in prose, some in verse. Of those in verse, one is dramatic, another lyrical. All that I can do is to state the principles which should, in my opinion, be acted upon by teachers of English Literature. The application of these principles must be made by the teachers themselves.

"With all classes of pupils alike, the main thing to be aimed at by the teacher is to lead them clearly and fully to understand the meaning of the author they are reading, and to appreciate the beauty, the nobleness, the justness, or the sublimity of his thoughts and language. Parsing, the analysis of sentences, the derivation of words, the explanation of allusions, the scansion of verse, the pointing out of figures of speech, the hundred and one minor matters on which the teacher may easily dissipate the attention of his pupils, should be strictly subordinated to this great aim. The masterpieces of our literature were written, not to serve as texts whereon exercises of various kinds might be based, but to convey to others, in the most attractive form, an account of the thoughts and feelings which pervaded the minds of their authors: so that if we wish to benefit in the highest degree by their perusal, we must make ourselves at home with their writers, and inhale for a time the mental atmosphere which they breathed. It is essential that the mind of the reader should be put *en rapport* with that of the writer. There

is something in the influence of a great soul upon another soul which defies analysis. No analysis of a poem, however subtle, can produce the same effect upon the mind and heart as the reading of the poem itself.

"O delight
And triumph of the poet—who would say
A man's mere 'yes,' a woman's common 'no,'
A little human hope of that or this,
And says the word so that it burns you through
With a special revelation, shakes the heart
Of all the men and women in the world,
As if one came back from the dead and spoke,
With eyes too happy, a familiar thing
Become divine in the utterance!"

"But though the works of Shakespeare and Milton and our other great writers were not intended by their authors to serve as textbooks for future generations, yet it is unquestionably the case that a large amount of information may be imparted and a very valuable training given if we deal with them as we deal with Homer and Horace in our best schools. Parsing, grammatical analysis, the derivation of words, prosody, composition, the history of the language, and, to a certain extent, the history of the race, may be both more pleasantly and more profitably taught in this than in any other way. It is advisable for other reasons, also, that the study of these subjects should be conjoined with that of English Literature. Not only may time be thus economized, but the difficulty of fixing the attention of flighty and inappreciative pupils may more easily be overcome.

"In order that it may be understood in what way the study of the subjects mentioned in the preceding paragraph may be carried on along with that of an English classic, I shall now detail at some length the work which an advanced class ought to do. I shall give a brief notice of a number of topics which I must mention in some order, but it must not be inferred that the order here given is that in which a class should deal with them. Whether a class should take them up separately, or concurrently, or in groups, must be determined in each case by the teacher, after considering the length and character of the classic about to be read, the training of the class, and the way in which he can do his work to the greatest advantage. I shall indicate the topics the consideration of which may be omitted by junior classes.

"(i.) A synopsis of the contents, plot, or general meaning of the work to be read should be required from each pupil, not only as a proof that he has read it, but also as a useful exercise in composition. This abstract should be first given orally and afterwards committed to writing. In the case of a work like the 'Lady of the Lake,' which cannot be read through at a single sitting, it will be found convenient to require the synopsis to be made out in parts, which should afterwards be combined.

"(ii.) The work should be read aloud, with due attention to elocution. Short poems and the finer passages in long poems should be committed to memory and recited. But no passage should be read aloud or recited in the class before it is tolerably well understood. A classical composition appeals to the ear as well as to the understanding, and much both of its melody and of its meaning will be missed if it is not read aloud. The educative influence of good reading is a subject to which the attention of many Canadian teachers requires to be directed. The teacher or pupil who can read a fine poem with expression, who

"Says the word so that it burns you through
With a special revelation,"

is a power and a refining influence in a school. Of course, many, on account of natural defects, can never become very good readers, but all can be taught to read with some degree of expression. There are, moreover, always some in a school who can be taught to read well, and the æsthetic benefit of good reading is not confined to the reader—it is shared by the listeners.

"(iii.) The life and times of the author should be studied, and the connection between the characteristic features of the literature of his era and the general history of the period developed. Any illustrations of the modes of thought, manners, customs, political views, etc., of the period that can be drawn from his pages should be brought under the attention of the class.

"(iv.) The attention of the class should likewise be directed to all difficulties in parsing or analysis that occur in the work under consideration. It will serve a good purpose if the regular exercises in parsing and analysis be taken from its pages. As occasion offers, explanations bearing on the history of the grammatical structure of the language should be given to advanced classes.

"(v.) Junior classes cannot be expected to know much more of etymology than the outlines of the history of our vocabulary and the more easy and obvious derivations. The attention of advanced classes should be directed to any words that are interesting on æ-