

it shall be prescribed as such, a very different showing will no doubt be made. As it is now, it only shows the difference between trained and untrained teaching. Grecian and Roman history are taught by trained teachers. Bible history is taught in the Sunday-schools by untrained teachers chiefly. In the past Sunday-school teachers have been appointed more from the standpoint of their willingness to perform the duties than from their special qualifications for the position. And it speaks volumes for them that without any pecuniary reward, with a devotion to their work that is heroic in many cases, they are found Sabbath after Sabbath instructing their classes, and giving their time at much personal sacrifice.

In the olden times, when all books but the Bible were scarce, and religious controversy was more intense, there is no doubt that more voluntary attention was given to the study of the Bible than at present. In this age of books, magazines and newspapers, it is not surprising that some attention has been diverted from Bible study. Some religious bodies have recognized the need of trained Sabbath school teachers, and there is now a large number of such teachers engaged in the work. Perhaps the time will come when the Sunday-schools will be as well provided for in that respect as the day schools. It would greatly hasten the time if it were deemed expedient to remunerate the services of the Sunday-school teachers in the same manner as is now done in other branches of church work.

TALKS WITH TEACHERS.

Some criticism has recently been indulged in at the expense of the public schools regarding the results of the law examinations. While I do not believe that the schools are, to a great extent, responsible in that instance, yet the blame imputed to us, I hope, will have a beneficial effect in that it will direct our attention to defects that may exist in our own work and produce increased vigilance on the part of teachers. We should not be too sensitive to criticism, because when it is fair and well founded it always does good. Some of us, I think, are living in a "fool's paradise," and have persuaded ourselves to believe that the work done in the public schools is almost perfection itself. This is a very wrong idea. The work of the public schools always has been, and always will be, short of perfection. If such were not the case progress would be impossible and the stationary stage has been reached. Fair and competent criticism, if it is received in a proper spirit, will go a long way toward aiding us to remove imperfections, and we should be grateful for it.

One subject regarding which complaint has been made, is spelling. I wonder whether or not that is a tender point with us. I am convinced that it is, and I think that we should not complain and seek to excuse ourselves if censured on account of such a deficiency. I have referred to this subject before in these talks, and I speak with some knowledge of the facts when I repeat that our schools are nearly all weak on the subject of spelling. What are the causes of this weakness? I believe them to be as follows, aside from poor method.

- (1) The increased amount of work in other subjects and the increased number of subjects on the curriculum.
- (2) Want of time on the part of the teacher for drill and the proper correction of errors.
- (3) Neglect of teachers to drill upon words met with elsewhere than in the reading lessons.
- (4) The disuse of the spelling book in recent years.
- (5) The substitution of the sentence method for the alphabetical in teaching the first steps in reading. (I do not give this reason as my own, but it is urged by many teachers.)

Can we not overcome these difficulties and do better work? I think we can, all of us, and I know of some teachers who have effected a marked improvement. It is the skilful teacher who is capable of doing the maximum of thorough work in the minimum of time. We should begin to teach spelling when the pupil begins school. The pupil at the end of the first year should not only be familiar with the form, but ought also to be able to spell, not only orally, but in writing, the words in the primer. As he advances through the grades all words met with in reading, arithmetic, geography, history, grammar, etc., should be carefully taught. I think there should be a judicious mixture of oral spelling and dictation. The written work is the surest test, because in oral spelling you can not always be sure that the whole class knows the word, though a few may do so. But how is the teacher to find time to correct the errors in the written work of a class of forty or fifty?

Supervisor Metcalf of the Boston schools, when in St. John a few years ago, gave an excellent plan to assist the teachers in this. Each teacher is to provide herself with a curtain before the blackboard. The dictation lesson is written on the board in the morning and the curtain drawn over it. It is then dictated, the slates changed and the curtain withdrawn when the pupils correct the work subject to the close supervision of the teacher. The corrections are drilled upon and the curtain drawn again. The next day the same les-