

There is a great deal of truth in the statement that arithmetics are pretty nearly all the same. They are the best scrap-books that we have. Years ago Mr. Walker protested against arithmetical conundrums in schools. Though his protest had some effect, the character of the text books has not altered to any appreciable extent. Because of the great similarity in texts there has grown up the feeling that arithmetic is arithmetic, and that what is good in one part of the world is good in another. This is very unsound doctrine, for, though the combination of numbers is ever the same, the application varies widely with time and place. The study of arithmetic is nearly altogether a matter of the application of the facts of number. That which suits the country, does not suit the town. What might be useful in Manitoba might not be very suitable in British Columbia.

In a recent article in *School and Society*, it was pointed out by a distinguished writer that there are scores of terms used in problems in arithmetic that have actually no meaning whatever to the pupils. It was also shown in the same article that a great deal of the study in the schools was of no actual value in after life. Most men go through life without having to find out the area of a triangle, a semi-circle or a pyramid. Of course it can be said that arithmetic is to be justified on other than practical grounds. This is quite true. None the less does it seem that the best results in the subject can be secured when the problems presented have a direct relation to the experience of the pupils. Because this is true there should be variety in texts rather than uniformity.

The little paragraph quoted above refers in a jocular way to spelling and grammar. What makes grammar so heartless and forbidding is its uselessness. In his remarkable work on "Better Schools," Gregory says that in the most popular texts in grammar no less than 44 errors of speech are dealt with and corrected. An examination of the speech of children in one town shows that all common errors could be classified under less than 13 headings. In scientific grammar the case is even

worse. There are endless useless distinctions made by the grammarians, and these the pupils are forced to remember. They are taught to think that it is wisdom to remember them. A good grammar for the grades could be contained in 30 pages, and all that is necessary for the High Schools could be contained in 100 pages.

So far as spelling is concerned it can be made one of the most interesting of subjects for children. It is not the subject, but the traditional method of teaching it that has interfered with its popularity. Can any one imagine a pupil liking spelling who is asked to write out his mistakes fifty times? Such an imposition, even in these enlightened days, is quite common. The *Journal* has a feeling that imprisonment in a penitentiary is not too severe a punishment for those who impose such penalties upon children.

The best part of the quoted paragraph is that which refers to histories and geographies. Histories usually refer to matters that are beyond the comprehension of children. A really good history for schools has yet to be written. It should refer primarily to the social condition of the people, for this is something that interests all pupils and is fundamental to all true historical study. It is also the foundation for the teaching of civics—the most practical department of the study of history at the present time. As for geography, the whole subject will have to be rewritten after the war. It will never be possible to study this subject in the same way again. The teaching of both history and geography should promote national sentiment and give a clear conception of international duties.

Editorial Note

A writer in the daily press has made a strong plea for freedom in the schools, taking as his text the phrase, "Diversity in Unity." In his discussion of the subject, however, he seems to have got no farther than the first word of his text.

The French Vocabulary that was promised for October will appear in next issue.