

SOME NECESSARY REFORMS AMONG GRADED SCHOOLS.

Last month the REVIEW indicated a few changes for the better that might be brought about at the hands of the N. B. Provincial Legislature. "The mills of the gods grind slowly," and there can be no doubt but that all the reforms mentioned will come to pass in time. It is just possible that the excellent suggestions which the REVIEW is about to make to city boards, may not all be adopted at once, as "great bodies move slowly," but in this case it is equally certain that the changes will be made.

There is a regulation requiring a teacher to be present in his room at least twenty minutes before the beginning of each session. No fault can be found with this, but it bears particularly hard upon those teachers who live at a distance from their schools. The present length of the noon recess in most towns is one hour and a-half. Deduct twenty minutes from this, and there remains but one hour and ten minutes for the teacher to be absent. Teaching is not an ordinary occupation—those who engage in it are prone to nervousness and dyspepsia. A hurried dinner, and a still more hurried walk after it, has a very injurious effect upon many teachers. Would it not be preferable to do in all towns as is done in a few of them? Make the noon recess two hours and dismiss at four, instead of as at present at half past three? There can be no doubt but that the parents would welcome the change, and it would be one means of diminishing tardiness. Until such a change could be brought about, would it not be well to regard ten minutes before the beginning of the afternoon session as sufficient?

On stormy days, and perhaps for other reasons, it is at times necessary to hold but one session of the schools; indeed there are some who favor one session for every day. An ordinary session consists of five hours for all pupils, save those in the first two grades, who are dismissed an hour earlier, thus making their attendance four hours. On "one session" days all pupils, including these primaries, are detained until one o'clock. A continuous session of three hours is considered too long by many who know, for very young children, but when it comes to four hours, all will agree that it is too long. Why should not the youngest people be dismissed at twelve on these days? Any primary teacher will certify that no work of any value is done between twelve and one o'clock. The pupils are hungry, nervous and restless, and should be dismissed as on other days—an hour earlier than the others.

Which town will be foremost in providing its pupils with stationery, pens and pencils? Ink is already supplied by many of them, and to furnish the articles mentioned is only another step in the same direction.

It goes without argument that such a provision would advance the educational interests of the schools along those particular lines, and would greatly cheapen those articles to the rate-payers. It may be a step toward free text books; that is only another argument in its favor, as all thinking and progressive people believe free text-books desirable.

It may be that school boards have not power within themselves to introduce these changes, but a little earnest advocacy will be all that is needed to bring them about if they are for the best. Let them be considered.

TALKS WITH TEACHERS.

I propose this month to take as the subject of my "talks," mental arithmetic. There has been a revival in the teaching of this subject during the last few years, but it is not yet dealt with in the most profitable manner. I may say in this connection that it was a mistake to do as was done in taking this subject from the requirements for license. Since that time it has languished in a great measure, and it is only recently that its importance has become generally recognized by our teachers.

Mental arithmetic is important, first, because it brings, like all other oral work, the teacher into closer touch with the pupils. It develops independence and self-reliance, because each pupil has to stand on his own feet. It produces accuracy and quickness of thought—two very important qualities. There is no better exercise in oral composition, as the "answer" is of little importance in this exercise, but the method of arriving at results is everything.

Teachers often ask: What text book shall I use for mental arithmetic? I would say that while a text is suggestive, it is not essential. No teacher should come before his class in this subject, as in all others, without having prepared his lesson beforehand. The mental work to be given should be based primarily on the principles bearing upon the arithmetic to be taken up for that day. A short time should also be devoted to general review. A judicious teacher will by means of mental arithmetic keep his pupils fresh in all review work.

Now as to the nature of the questions, I am not sure but that in many cases the practical is sacrificed for the mechanical. How common it is to hear teachers give