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If I had my way: English – for taste.

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they bequeathed us. The Renaissance in art and literature; the opening of the seas; the Industrial Revolution and its continuation until today, are all subjects which will fascinate children and are of value.

On the geographical side, we must take children outside South Africa, and not leave it all until the Standard Five year, which in the present syllabus is so overcrowded. In each year from Std. 3 to Std. 5 one aspect of South African geography could be handled and in the same year, something outside South Africa.

I want to see the library more and more the centre of the school. Most schools have good libraries, thanks to the Departmental policy, and they have a wealth of material in them but not as a rule on South Africa. The material on South Africa is hard to come by, and yet we are asked to restrict ourselves to it. By widening the syllabus we shall have a better chance of making full use of our libraries, and Social Studies will be one of the chief means of getting our children to use them. That is another reason why I want Social Studies to be retained.

IF I HAD MY WAY

English — for Taste

by L. PROCTOR

IT is one of the paradoxes of history that increased literacy has brought in its wake a corresponding deterioration in standards of literary taste. Whereas formerly literature was purveyed for and by an intellectual elite or social coterie, the present age is witnessing rapidly-increasing facilities for "education" (the word is used advisedly) but at the same time an alarming debasing or prostituting (there is no other term) of the written and spoken word. The reasons for this decline are multifarious, not the least being the narcotic effect on the present generation, young and old, of such mass media as radio, cinema, radiogram, television (carpe diem) and the various forms of advertising.

It is therefore the urgent task of present-day teachers to try to arrest this deterioration in standards of taste and judgment, or at least to try to divert these influences into useful channels. Although these words are intended to apply to the study of English, they do nevertheless apply virtually to every other subject in the school. Admittedly, English as a subject is wide enough to admit of a thorough examination of these problems, but surely no teacher is worth his salt who does not refer directly or indirectly to the need for adopting and maintaining certain standards in, for example, matters of dress, behaviour and etiquette.

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But it is upon the teacher of English, especially in the High School that this supreme task falls, because of his training, his status and the breadth of his outlook. The influence of the teacher of English upon his individual pupils and upon the school as a whole ought to be and must be considerable. It is not in the choice of suitable books, or in matters of pronunciation that this influence should be felt, but rather in helping the pupil to decide for himself what is spurious and false in the spoken or written word, be it a political speech or a slogan boomed out on the "C" programme, or a "True Love" picture story.

There are many obstacles that militate against success in the above task. The system of breaking up the time-table into water-tight compartments and the English lesson into various unrelated divisions — language, composition and the rest, produces in most children, even in the Matriculation Class, the idea that the part is more important than the whole.

But it is the role of the teacher himself that makes a delicate and diplomatic approach to the problem of taste imperative. To the "Booneager", the teacher is ex officio a "square", a person whose views and tastes are automatically old-fashioned and therefore suspect.

It is not suggested, however, that adult tastes should be superimposed onto the school child. That would be tantamount to putting Fisher coach-

work onto a go-kart. What should be the aim, in the author's opinion, is to develop, from the earliest schooldays, a capacity for judgment in the child himself, so that he is eventually able to feel instinctively that this is false, that that is in bad taste, that the other is an attempt to mislead. There is no single answer as to how this can be achieved. It is a long, laborious and delicate process, but one that is worth infinite pains, like the cultivation of a prize orchid. Like so many of our tasks in teaching, the methods of cultivation depend upon the individual teacher — the judicious amount of pruning, the right amount of sunlight, the proper application of fertiliser must be in the last resort in the hands of the gardener himself. And when the flower has reached full bloom, we cannot but agree with Keats that:

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

IF I HAD MY WAY

English — for Speech

by J. ROBINSON

OCCASIONALLY one comes across a primary school boy or girl who speaks really good English. When this happens, it is invariably attributable to the home; the most important and effective aid to good English is a home in which the parents themselves speak good English and are particular about the English spoken by their children.

After the parents, the person in the best position to ensure a high standard of English among primary school children is the class teacher. Where a class is lucky enough to have a teacher who is actively interested in the standard of English of her children and who herself has a thorough command of English, the improvement of the English in that class is assured.

If I had my way, and assuming that such a position were possible or even feasible, I would like to see a primary school in which every teacher spoke good fluent English. Such a teacher would regard every subject and every lesson taught, with the exception of the second language, as an opportunity for the improvement of the English of the pupils. For as many as twenty hours a week, the pupils would be conscious of the fact that they were learning English, even if the subject of the moment were Arithmetic, or Hygiene. It is an accepted fact that children are good mimics and imitators. This fact could, indirectly, be of great benefit to the children.

The ability to speak well should be the primary aim; following on that in importance is the ability to read. It is in reading that the teacher will come up against one of her most serious difficulties — that of the backward reader. All too often this problem is not tackled with sufficient vigour until it is almost too late — by which I mean the boy in standard four or five who is unable to read. In most cases the backward reader could be taught to read by the time he reaches standard one or two, if extra time was devoted to reading and a fair amount of individual work done with the pupil. This extra time is not always available, but in my opinion it does not matter what other work is left undone if the time is devoted to reading. Further, it seems to me wrong that a child who cannot read his own language in standard one or two should be forced to attempt to read a second language.

The majority of children do not experience great difficulty in learning to read, and through reading the teacher can introduce them to all kinds of pleasures and worthwhile knowledge. I think that it is a good idea that the teacher herself should devote half an hour to an hour a week actually reading to the class. If she chooses wisely what she reads, it is certain that the pupils will be encouraged to take up the book where she left off.

In the upper standards of the primary school I would prefer to call "Language" by the more

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