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If I had my way: English – for speech

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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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appropriate name "Grammar", and I am sure that a regular dose of fairly formal grammar at this stage could only do good. At some stage it would appear that all children are told "Don't say 'Jane and me'; say 'Jane and I'." This seems to sink in although the reasons are not understood, and then inevitably we get, at a later stage, "He asked Jane and I out to dinner", and very often children are vaguely sceptical when you tell them that it is incorrect.

If all children had their seven years at a primary school under the guidance of seven enthusiastic and competent teachers of English, they would leave the primary school with the ability to read and speak fluently and correctly, and write up to a page or two of fairly entertaining English containing very few mistakes.

IF I HAD MY WAY

The Teaching of Biology

by ALAN G. WALPOLE, B.Sc.

THE harassed teacher sinks into his staffroom chair, turns to his neighbour and says . . . "If only I had my way . . ."

Of course, it all depends on the way he says it. If it is accompanied by a pathetic shrug of the shoulders and followed by a despairing sigh, there isn't much chance of him getting "his way" is there? But there is hope, however idealistic his ideas may be, if he is conscientiously trying to improve his own teaching methods and approach to the subject.

I hope that no teacher is so self-satisfied with his or her work that they never feel frustrated in some way or another. It is precisely this feeling of frustration which goads us on to take active steps — however small — towards the eventual attainment of successful teahing.

Biology should be a living subject, vital, pulsating with interest and activity, theoretical and *practical;* not divorced from everyday life; nor confined between the pages of a textbook, to be opened at the beginning of a period and closed at the end.

Difficulties

But what do we find? Overcrowded classrooms, inadequate text-books, charts and models, lack of equipment and above all lack of *time* and facilities to allow pupils to carry out individual research, as we are bound to an overwhelming matriculation syllabus and hampered by that "hardy annual" the examinations.

The above are only a few of the trials we have to face, but they are the more important ones and if I had my way . . .

The number of pupils in a Matriculation class would be twenty. This would ensure that the pupils received individual attention and guidance during a lesson. Most of our troubles arise from the overcrowding of the laboratory. The most important one being the foregoing of individual, or even group, practical work, due to the cramped conditions and lack of equipment.

Biology as Science

It is the essential function of the Biology teacher to guide his pupils, to encourage them to think for themselves, to stimulate their inherent interest and curiosity in the wonder of Life, and above all to train them to reach correct conclusions and detailed observation, to correlate, compare and systematise knowledge gained from dissections, projects and other forms of research.

Also, Biology being a scientific subject, the pupils should be taught:—

1) The correct use and care of instruments used, e.g. Microscopes, glassware, dissecting sets, etc.

2) Various techniques of staining and mounting plant and animal specimens.

3) The use of preserving media.

Besides the guidance of the teacher a laboratory manual, dealing with the above, should be provided for each pupil.

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