

effectiveness that it has been the writer's privilege to come upon recently. This monumental investigation of religious conditions, and their correlative educational and social and economic problems, is a veritable encyclopedia of after-war data, American and foreign, but, instead of being typically encyclopedic in form and make-up, its pages at a rapid thumbing resemble those of the advertising sections of a first-class magazine, being set with striking colored graphs of all types and correspondingly catching illustrations, maps, and pictures. It is a lesson not only to the leaders of the church but of the school, and it is hoped that future reports of both may be definitely affected. Statistics is, as was stated at the outset, a fundamental science, but graphical presentation is its sister science and the one which is more significant for use with the general reader.

W. J. GIFFORD

#### IV

### THE FREE READING PERIOD IN THE THIRD GRADE

The Third Grade children have been *reading* this fall instead of *studying reading*. The love for good stories that has grown in the class has made this plan, which we followed, a most worth-while one.

There were forty-two children in the grade and we had, in our room library, forty-five suitable books ranging from Second Grade readers, (ones to which they had not previously had access), to Fourth Grade readers. In addition to these we secured a large number of books from the Normal School library. Some of these books were readers, others were simple fairy story books and history, geography, and nature-story books.

All of our books were placed on a long low shelf in the room. At the same hour every day, for a period of thirty minutes, we have a free reading period. At this time the children go to the bookshelf and select the books they wish to read. If a child shows signs of being a poor judge in deciding on what he is to read, the teacher who is in the midst of the group and standing ready to advise helps him to make a wise choice. If a poor reader comes along and hesitates over getting a book, the teacher interests him

in extremely easy reading matter, even to the extent of pointing out a particular story in which she has reason to believe he will be interested. When a child who reads unusually well comes for his book the teacher advises him, in the event that she sees him about to take material which wouldn't be likely to appeal to him. When all of the children have their books, they are encouraged to read. In order to save time the teacher goes to the desk of those who seem to find it difficult to decide on a story, or seem to be wasting time. She very quickly points out in the table of contents a story suitable for the child. Then the children read uninterruptedly, knowing that if they come to a word they cannot pronounce or any part of the reading they do not understand that the teacher will come to their desks and give them the help they need.

While the teacher is pronouncing words or clearing up the meanings of words, she takes note of these words which give the most trouble and at a separate period she conducts a phrase drill including all of them. She is very careful to stress drill on the words they are likely to meet in their future readings. When the period comes to an end the children are given permission to keep, in their desks, any book containing a story they have started and would like to finish. Others return their books to the shelf. At any time during the day when the children complete a piece of work and have a few minutes to wait for others, they get the books from their desks and finish the stories they began during the reading period. We do not wish the children to feel that they must make a return from this reading. We do not *require* them to reproduce their stories. We feel that this phase of the work will take care of itself if we succeed in leading them to love good stories. The fact that we have accomplished our aim is evidenced in several ways.

Very soon after the class began reading in this way, the children were found to be pointing out the stories they had read to other children and getting them to read the same ones.

Sometimes a child would read a story he wanted to play. He would interest other children in wanting to play the story and a large number of them would read it, so they could tell it to the entire class and all could take part in playing it.

It was not at all unusual for a child to ask to be allowed some time in which to tell the members of his class a story he had read.

Very often children found a long story they liked so well they wanted others to enjoy and they interested three or four others in reading with a view to telling it in parts, each child taking a certain section of the story. One story which was treated in this way was that of Robinson Crusoe. Six boys read the entire book (the McMurry-Husted Edition), because one boy had read it and recommended it. Then they had a meeting and decided just which part of the story each one should be responsible for. They re-read that special part as a preparation for the recitation when they were to tell their classmates about Robinson Crusoe. After they had told this story they secured permission to tell it to another grade. They talked about the fact that the other class had not had any Robinson Crusoe books and had not had a chance to look at the pictures which go with the story. They talked of passing a book around while telling the story. A discussion followed during which they decided that they could show all of the class at one time just how the different things looked by making a Crusoe sandtable. This they did by working in committees. They appointed their own committees, made their own plans in detail, coming to the teacher only when they wished her to settle some point. After the class had completed this sandtable work and told the story to the visiting group, there was no doubt as to whether they had been able to read the Crusoe text and enjoy it.

We needed a great deal more reading material when our plan had been in practice only a short time. Since, in this kind of reading, each individual could proceed at his own rate, many of the children could complete three or four stories during the period. The children realized and talked of this need. They brought books from home and added them to those on our shelf. Many of the children talked over their books with each other and exchanges for home readings were agreed upon. Then, as Christmas was near, someone suggested that it would be a good thing for them to ask for books in their Christmas lists. This idea appealed so strongly to the class they agreed to try to get at least one book apiece. This meant the growth of a little collection for some, but for

many it was the beginning of a personal library.

The children are most enthusiastic over these libraries. They have planned to do their best to get additional books whenever possible, to add some on birthdays and Christmases anyway. We keep a list of books suitable for our boys and one for our girls posted in the room. Before buying a book, the children consult these lists and decide from the title, just which one they wish to possess. The amount of reading the children have done is really remarkable.

The majority of the class had rather have time in which to read stories than to hear a teacher tell stories for the same length of time. To us this fact alone is positive proof that they are enjoying many good stories every day. We know that they are becoming acquainted with much more good literature than it would be possible to give them in any other way.

Below is added a list of some of the books used in the free reading period:

All the Year Round: Autumn—Strong.  
 Among the Farm-yard People—Pierson.  
 Child's Book of Nature—Hooker  
 Short Stories of Our Shy Neighbors—Kelly.  
 Robinson Crusoe (6 books)—McMurry-Husted.  
 The Second Book of Stories for the Story-Teller—Fanny E. Coe.  
 King Arthur and His Knights—Radford.  
 Stories to Tell to Children—Sara Cone Bryant.  
 Five Minute Stories—Laura E. Richards.  
 Indian Days of the Long Ago—E. S. Curtis.  
 Stories and Story-Telling—A. M. Keyes.  
 The Howells Story Book—Burt-Howells.  
 Child's World Readers—Books Two, Three and Four.  
 Edson-Laing Reader—Book Three.  
 Fairy Reader.  
 Heart of Oak Books—Book Three.  
 Young and Field Literary Readers—Books Two and Three.  
 Child Reader—Book Three.  
 New Education Reader—Books Three and Four.  
 The American Reader—Book Three.  
 Story Hour Reader—Book Three.  
 Elson Reader—Books Three and Four.  
 Inston Reader—Book Three.  
 Everyday Classics—Book Three.  
 Aldine Reader—Book Three.  
 Carroll and Brooks Reader—Book Three.  
 Horace Mann Reader—Book Two.  
 The Story of Rosy Cheeks and Strong Heart—J. M. and A. T. Andrew.  
 Christ Child Tales—Proudfoot.  
 Instructor School Library (twenty-five books suitable for Third Grade children, all containing history, geography and nature stories.)

ZOE PORTER