

Last year, in consequence of the late period at which I entered on my duties, only twenty-six schools were examined. In order, therefore, to compare the results of 1883 with those of the preceding year, it is necessary to give an additional table in which the statistics are restricted to the same twenty-six schools (Table II.) :—

TABLE II.

	Number of Scholars presented for Examination in Standard.	Number of Scholars who passed.	Percentage.	Percentage in 1882.
Standard I.	410	369	90	84.2
Standard II. ..	571	420	73.6	72.7
Standard III.	539	259	48.1	61.1
Standard IV.	341	113	33.1	53.5
Standard V.	155	71	45.8	39.1
Standard VI.	27	13	48.1	54.5
Totals ...	2,043	1,245	60.9	68.6

In the twenty-six schools, therefore, the percentage of scholars who passed is 60.9, whilst last year it was 68.6, so that, as far as the schools are concerned, there appears to be a decline in efficiency to the extent of nearly 8 per cent. It is of course possible that my examination questions may have been slightly more difficult this year than last, or that I may have had in my mind a somewhat higher standard of excellence for the answers. I believe, however, that the true explanation of the lower percentage this year is to be found in the fact that in four of our largest schools (included in these twenty-six) important changes have this year been made in the staff, a new head-teacher having been appointed in each case. Such changes always affect a school unfavourably for a time, in consequence of the lack of interest which all, teachers and scholars alike, feel in their work whilst anticipating them. It is not surprising, therefore, that each of the four schools referred to has this year obtained a lower percentage of passes, or that, in consequence, as these four schools contain a large proportion of the total number of scholars examined, the gross result should be below that of last year.

It is desirable to notice further that the retrogression is confined to Standards III., IV., and VI., whilst in the case of Standards I., II., and V. there has been progress, and in Standard I. very marked advance.

As I did last year, and as is usually done, I have completed my statistics by giving a further table (Table III.) showing the percentage of passes made by scholars in each of the standard subjects :—

TABLE III.

Subjects.	Number of Scholars presented.	Number passed.	Percentage.
Reading	3,113	2,683	86.3
Spelling	3,112	2,179	70.0
Writing	3,113	3,008	96.6
Arithmetic	3,113	1,581	50.8
Grammar	1,453	862	59.3
Geography	2,340	1,564	66.8
History	1,446	767	53.0

For the purpose of comparison, I give, as before, another table (Table IV) embracing only the twenty-six schools already referred to :—

TABLE IV.

Subjects.	Number of Scholars presented.	Number passed.	Percentage.	Percentage in 1882.
Reading	2,043	1,817	88.9	85.4
Spelling	2,043	1,462	71.6	75.3
Writing	2,043	2,008	98.3	92.3
Arithmetic	2,043	1,072	52.5	62.2
Grammar	1,062	642	60.5	76.2
Geography	1,633	1,157	70.8	73.7
History	1,059	648	61.2	62.2

As was to be expected from the results exhibited in Table II., this table also points to retrogression in most of the subjects of study, the mechanical arts of reading and writing alone showing progress; but I need not refer again to the explanation of this, which I have already given. The decline is greatest in grammar and arithmetic, which latter subject is naturally the weakest of all. The difference between the results of the two years in the other subjects is not great.