

results. In the case of some schools—notably those at Ashburton and Rangiora—the meagre results were due to causes altogether beyond the control of the present head-masters. Further, the questions set and the conditions necessary to secure a pass were somewhat different from those of previous years. This year more time was devoted to the work of examination in the large schools, and in every case the Inspector who set the questions supervised the children during the time allowed for answering them. The numbers in the lower standards and preparatory classes are still excessively large, and this objectionable feature is due partly to unpunctuality, irregular attendance, and the removal of children from one school to another, and partly to feebleness in the discipline and teaching. The percentage of passes for the seventy-seven country schools examined by me for results was 72, or 2 per cent. lower than that for the total number of schools examined. Forty schools came above, and thirty-seven below, the average. My aim in examining schools for results has always been to find out whether children had gained such a sufficiently intelligent knowledge of the work of the standard in which they were presented as would enable them to successfully cope with the difficulties of the next; and I do not think that I have been too exacting in my requirements.

I will now present in a tabulated form the results obtained in the various standard subjects in the total number of schools examined, and also in the seventy-seven country schools examined by me; and afterwards offer what criticisms I think necessary on the way in which these subjects have been taught. I did not take any part in the examination of arithmetic, geography, and science in the large schools, so that my remarks on these subjects do not apply to the schools in question.

TABLE No. III.

Subjects.	In Total Number of Schools Examined.			In Seventy-seven Schools examined by Me.		
	Presented.	Passed.	Percentage.	Presented.	Passed.	Percentage.
Reading	9,811	9,125	93	3,116	2,942	94
Spelling	9,811	8,062	82.1	3,116	2,495	80
Writing	9,811	9,211	93.8	3,116	2,979	95
Arithmetic	9,811	7,017	71.5	3,116	2,220	71.2
Grammar	4,754	3,370	70.8	1,471	1,140	77.5
Geography	7,337	5,176	70.5	2,271	1,644	72.3
History	4,713	3,334	70.7	1,439	1,053	73.1

Reading.—In a few schools this subject is taught with fairly creditable efficiency, but in the rest the character of the reading ranges from indifferent to bad. In the higher standards the pupils require to read with greater ease and fluency, and to show a better acquaintance with the elements of elocution. The want of fluency and expression is, I think, very often due to the fact that sufficient attention is not paid to the meanings of the words, the children merely uttering them without having any very clear idea of their force or connection with the other words in the sentences read. In the teaching of no subject is the necessity of commencing well more important. In too many schools the children in the preparatory classes and lower standards are allowed to read or recite, either simultaneously or individually, in a monotonous, or, as it is very often called, a sing-song voice, and this injuriously affects their reading for years afterwards. Simultaneous reading is of the greatest importance if properly used; but it is a method of teaching reading which is liable to very great abuse, and when abused it is worse than useless, if not positively hurtful. When reading simultaneously the children should be made to imitate the voice and accent of their teacher, and not allowed to repeat the words in a monotonous tone; and care should be taken that the lazy and inattentive portion of the class is not permitted to simply catch up the words repeated by the more attentive pupils. I believe that it would be a great advantage if two sets of books were used in the junior classes in every school during the year—one to be kept in the school, and used only for reading practice. The funds raised by entertainments and subscriptions for prizes might very profitably be devoted for one year to the purpose of obtaining such a set of readers. My suggestion, if carried out, would soon improve the reading, for children who read two or three books during a year are more likely to turn out good readers than those who read over the same book a dozen times. That the children—at least, in the lower standards—know the usual school readers by heart is very evident when they are called upon to read from a book of similar difficulty, but previously unknown to them. The reading, when tested in this way, showed that the greatest defect was the inability to group words according to their sense—a point of the greatest importance in the teaching of reading. Teachers sometimes, by allowing their pupils to stand too close to them, encourage them to read in a low and almost inaudible tone. It too often happens that very little attention is paid to the thorough preparation of the pieces of poetry selected for the year's work. The children, as a rule, are fairly word-perfect, but they repeat the lines without the slightest attempt at style or expression.

Spelling.—This subject was examined this year chiefly by means of passages dictated from the reading books in use in each standard. There is not the slightest doubt that this is the best method of testing the value of the instruction given, as it must be acknowledged that we learn to spell for the purpose of spelling correctly when we write.

Writing.—This subject cannot be said to be successfully taught. Writing, like everything else, should be taught intelligently, and on some well defined plan; but it too often happens that children are allowed to write without any attempt being made to teach them how to write. In the first stages