

under such circumstances, to a junior teacher, or even to a senior pupil; and I generally find little or no improvement in the matter of intelligence. Some vague general idea of the sense of a passage may generally be presumed; but attempts to obtain evidence of accurate apprehension of the meanings of selected words or phrases too frequently meet with mortifying discomfiture. For this result the reading books of Standards V. and VI., especially the latter, are not entirely blameless.

*Spelling* is intimately connected with the reading, and, with the proper use of transcription and dictation, may be expected to improve with it. The expectation of perfect familiarity with the words of the reading books has been most frequently disappointed in Standard III. In the higher classes attention to suitable punctuation in the dictation exercise ought to be much more general.

*Writing*.—The Caxton copy-books and those of Mr. Vere Foster continue to be almost exclusively used. Many teachers show a decided preference for the former; but the latter are coming into more general use on account of their greater suitability to the requirements in the lower classes. I must confess, for my own part, that I am fully satisfied with neither, and I should gladly welcome a new series specially adapted to the New Zealand code, and exhibiting the merits of both. Those of Messrs. Marcus Ward and Co., based on the principles laid down by Mr. Vere Foster, seem to be the most suitable of all the existing series that have come under my notice. The writing of Standard II. continues to be the least satisfactory, and with the object of removing this weakness several teachers are, with my approval, introducing the use of the pen in Standard I. In a large proportion of the schools the examination papers are well and neatly written, and great care is taken with the copy-books; but in many I have still to lament the want of sufficient evidence of supervision in the writing lessons, and in a very few I have had to comment severely either on the careless introduction of a variety of styles or on the unformed scribble accompanying the use of advanced copy-books in junior classes.

*Arithmetic*.—In this subject I wish again to press upon teachers the importance of mental exercises in every class, with the object partly of improving the written work by securing greater facility in small calculations and partly of giving a clearer insight into the reasons for processes and of enabling children to grasp readily the real conditions of a problem. In the former aspect the practice is most urgently required in connection with the making out of bills of accounts in Standard IV., which are rarely found correct; in the latter—the more important educational aspect—it can scarcely fail to prove of great value in the preparation for those tests of the power of applying arithmetical rules to practical uses which will hereafter be invariably applied. Such tests in the series of examinations just concluded have revealed no improvement on the work of the previous year.

*Grammar and Composition*.—For the purpose of enforcing the early introduction of, and greater practice in, the analysis of sentences, recommended in my last report, I have this year given simple sentences of less obvious construction for analysis in Standard V. While disaster has thus been the result of any unsoundness in the teaching, I am pleased to be able to record some steps of advance. In parsing, the fault most frequently found is an attempt to do too much. The full parsing of a higher standard is not unusual in Standard IV.—full of errors. If there is any time to spare after securing the minimum knowledge of inflection in this standard, it will be more profitably spent in improving the composition and insuring greater certainty in the recognition of functions of words, than in entering upon the accident of the verb, a special feature of Standard V. Composition still leaves much to be desired.

*Geography* shows very great improvement in Standard II. A more liberal interpretation of the requirements prevails, and cases of mere rote knowledge are very rare. Maps are, I think, more freely used throughout the classes, and the map drawing is often of considerable merit. Shortcomings are, however, frequent in Standards IV. and V. and the knowledge generally of physical geography is very rudimentary.

*History* continues to be very fairly taught. I have been particularly pleased in Standard III. to find in a few cases the dry bones of events and periods endowed with the life of personal associations and interesting details. A tendency observable in some of the smaller schools to produce in this class merely an elementary form of the special knowledge required in Standard IV. cannot be approved.

*Other Subjects*.—In the earlier part of the year a circular issued with the Board's approval required teachers in every school to devote some attention to repetition of poetry, drill, and disciplinary exercises, and to provide a certain specified time for one or more of the subjects—(a) drawing, (b) vocal music, (c) science and object lessons, according to the opportunities which the number of the staff afforded, the last group being expected in all schools with more than one teacher employed. The subsequent issue of the new regulations of the Education Department determined the choice of teachers—where a choice was given—in favour of drawing, and at the time of examination there were few schools in which some drawing had not been done. Too often the work exhibited, besides being of a very elementary character, presented no promising features, and could scarcely be regarded as of any value; but at least a dozen schools showed fair to good freehand, estimated by the measure of the standard requirements; in several, more or less progress had been made with geometrical constructions; two had made a vigorous effort to cope with the difficulties of model drawing; and one produced excellent results in the principles of linear perspective. Object lessons and lessons on science were included in the time-tables of about a score of schools, and in a fair proportion of cases substantial progress had been made; the subjects taken being—(a) chemistry or the principles of agriculture, (b) physics, (c) physiology, and in one case (d) a little botany. Of these subjects agriculture and physiology show signs of becoming the most popular, the former from its practical importance in the country, and the latter, doubtless, from the great assistance to be obtained from diagrams. A list of verses for repetition is in all cases provided at examination, and I have noticed with pleasure the extension of an ambition to make the term "recitation" more appropriate. Drill is not quite so general, and, from the discouragement