

the time devoted to arithmetic to strictly mental work, as I believe this to be an efficient help to the abolishment of the bad practice of counting on the fingers. Beginning with the best, the work of the standards in this subject stands in the following order of merit: Standard I., III., II., VI., IV., V.; Standard V. being decidedly the weakest. In this subject there were very few papers that could be called really slovenly, though there were varying degrees of neatness. To facilitate the training in this important feature of the work I suggested, during the year, the use of actuary-ruled exercise books for the lower classes. Most of the teachers have adopted this plan, and they report favourably of the result.

SPELLING AND DICTATION are fairly well taught, very few schools showing really inferior work. As to quality of work the standards show as follows: Standards I., II., III., V., VI., IV.

GRAMMAR.—Much that I said in my last year's report concerning this subject is still applicable. Considering that the questions given were, on the whole, decidedly less difficult, the fact of the passes being 8 per cent. lower in this subject than in 1886 would appear to point to anything but improvement. The difference, however, is more apparent than real, and is caused principally by the disturbing influence caused by one or two exceptionally bad cases amongst a small group of schools. As to quality of work, the classes rank as follows: Standard IV., III., V., and VI. The work of Standards V. and VI. is decidedly weak, the weakness exhibiting itself in the former principally in the inflexions of the verb and analysis, and in the latter in analysis and derivation. The work of Standard IV. is stronger than in any other subject; the results for this class being generally very creditable. Standard III takes a fair position, the work of various schools showing great contrasts; some exhibiting most excellent work, and others results which are most decidedly bad. I am quite sure that teachers and pupils would derive benefit in every way if analysis were commenced at an earlier stage. The most difficult problem seems to be, how to make the study of formal grammar bear fruit in connection with composition. The fact that the composition of Standard IV. was, after making all due allowances, decidedly the best, would seem to indicate that this subject is now better taught than formerly. Too often, however, letters and short essays, fairly well expressed, are disfigured by bad spelling, the absence of capital letters and punctuation, and slovenly writing and arrangement. The Fourth Standard in the Greymouth School deserves special mention for this portion of the grammar work. Generally speaking the subject requires more systematic treatment; and if teachers would commence the year with a well-defined system of teaching, and carefully record the effect, they would, I am sure, experience benefit therefrom.

GEOGRAPHY.—This subject presents various aspects, the classes ranking as follows: As a pass subject, Standard III. by far the best, Standard VI. and Standard V., the last-named standard showing only 39 per cent of passes. Class geography is, on the whole, fairly done. Weakness is a prominent feature in the work of Standard V., more particularly so in mathematical and physical geography. Further experience has confirmed the impression that the system of teaching recommended in my last report is the correct one. Standards II. and III. were judged partly by an oral examination before the map, and partly by slate or paper work. For Standard IV. the choice was given to the teacher of having the examination oral or written.

HISTORY, as taught at present, I do not consider of much value. The ludicrous results, from taking Standard III. out of the every day beaten path of questioning, proved how little reality there is in the subject to that class. Amongst some fairly good work in the higher classes, the tendency to give rote answers was also very conspicuous; and in oral questioning it was difficult to get proof that the continuity of history had been presented to the scholars. The confused ideas entertained upon the subject may be exemplified by the following answers: "Wat Tyler was a blacksmith. He went shooting in the New Forest, and found William Rufus up a tree and shot him." "After the Commonwealth Anicky (anarchy) succeeded." The last answer strikingly illustrates the danger of mere word teaching. Cards were prepared for this subject, but, if the teacher preferred it, the examination was conducted orally.

SINGING.—Orwell Creek, Brunnerton, and Cobden are the only schools which teach singing in all classes. Greymouth and Westbrook confine it to the lower standards, and the rest omit it altogether. Brunnerton decidedly takes the lead in this subject. I hope to see the list extended.

DRAWING shows a decided improvement.

RECITATION also gives proof of greater care.

ELEMENTARY DRILL is not neglected, though it is not general.

SEWING.—The committee of ladies who kindly undertook to examine the needlework report generally that good work is done, according to the regulations. Kynnersley and Nelson Creek take first rank in this subject in the order of their names.

Improvement is perceptible in object lessons and elementary science, Cobden, Greymouth, Brunnerton, and Westbrook Schools deserving special mention.

CLASSES P 1 AND P 2.—Considering the difficulties that teachers of small schools have to contend with, these classes are, on the whole, fairly well taught. At Greymouth, Hatters, and Cobden Schools the work in these classes deserves special mention, and, in a lesser degree perhaps, the Brunnerton School.

DISCIPLINE AND GENERAL BEHAVIOUR.—In the matters of discipline and the general behaviour of the scholars I have no complaint to make, though in one or two schools a little more strictness would have a salutary effect.

HOME LESSONS.—As to home lessons, I cannot agree altogether with those who would have them abolished. I would again, however, sound a note of warning as to giving home work in arithmetic before the scholars are thoroughly drilled in the principles of the rule and the methods of working. Medical men speak strongly concerning the worry and mental strain caused by the practice of giving home lessons. Neglect of the preparation I speak of is, I think, really the principal cause of trouble.

PUPIL-TEACHERS' EXAMINATION.—The pupil-teachers were examined in January, with the candidates for certificates, &c. Eight sat for the fourth class, three for the third class, three for the second class, and two for the first class—the schools represented being Greymouth, Brunnerton,