

relative heights, in their points of junction, supply evidence of lax supervision. The few inspection visits that I have been enabled to make have shown me that, in some schools at least, too little use is made of the blackboard in dealing with this subject. The slate writing of Standard I. seems to have been taught in most schools with a good deal of care. In very few cases has it been my duty to report adversely on it, or to record that teachers have neglected to see to the proper ruling of the children's slates. But if the copy-book writing is fairly good, I regret to find that the number of schools in which carefully-written exercise books are to be found is exceedingly limited. In many instances not only was the most wretched scribbling approved by the teachers—their signatures were to be found on some of the pages—but exercises supposed to be corrected showed numerous errors that had been passed over unmarked. Very little reflection would convince teachers of the serious mischief that this laxity on their part is sure to bring about. Much might be done towards improving the home exercises of Standard II. and Standard III., by putting into the hands of the children exercise books so ruled that the children may write between parallel lines. Books of this description are, I believe, procurable in Invercargill, and I notice with pleasure that they have already been introduced into one or two schools in this district with eminently good results. I take this opportunity of reminding teachers that copy-book writing, the errors of which are unmarked, will be more strictly dealt with on examination day than that which shows evidence of supervision.

SPELLING.—In the First, Fifth, and Sixth Standards the results obtained in this subject are, on the whole, very satisfactory. This is also true in a modified degree of the work done by Standard II. The spelling of Standards III. and IV. however, as tested by selected words and a passage of dictation, is very moderate. The more difficult words are, as a rule, correctly spelt, while numerous errors are made in simple words occurring in the passage dictated. This of course must be attributed to carelessness, not to ignorance. Transcription in Standard II. seems to have received less attention than its paramount importance merits. Usually the writing was fairly good, but it was rare to meet with transcription exercises absolutely free from errors of some sort. In this matter there can be no half measures. A transcription exercise carelessly written, or imperfectly corrected, not only does no good, it does positive harm, as a mistake to which attention has not been drawn is tolerably sure to be repeated.

ARITHMETIC.—This subject supplies a very large number of failures in all classes except Standards I. and II. With respect to the upper classes, the reason of this weakness is not hard to find. The work is too mechanical. Many teachers defer the introduction of problems until the Third Standard is reached. This is most unwise. From the very first a child should be supplied with problems, graduated in difficulty; and in dealing with these he should be trained to set down in full the different steps of the process, so as to show clearly the principle on which he has worked. Only thus will arithmetic fulfil its functions as an exercise in exact thinking, and as a means of familiarising children with such methods of computation as will be useful to them in after life. Standards II. and III. require more thorough drilling in the notation of numbers. A large proportion of the failures in these standards may be referred to weakness in this respect. I have seldom found a school in which mental arithmetic is altogether neglected. I should like, however, to see much greater prominence given to this subject in all classes, but more especially in the junior standards.

GRAMMAR.—The results obtained in this subject are, broadly speaking, by no means commensurate with the time devoted to it. In not a few schools parsing is well taught. In others, again, it is almost worthless; and the reason of the non-success is apparent from an examination of the work done by Standard IV. In this class a demand is made for an expression of the process of reasoning by which a child has been led to assign a word to a particular class or part of speech. The statement of the use of the word is usually vague and inaccurate; and not rarely the inference drawn from the statement is utterly wrong. Occasionally the part of speech is given while no attempt is made to explain the function. These are the evidences of unsystematic training. The exercise has become one of guesswork, not of reasoning; and the time spent upon it has been time wasted. Much practice in oral parsing should be given. The children should be taught to fix their attention on the use of the word to be parsed, to state this use clearly and definitely, and then to refer the word to its class. Parsing for inflexion should be dealt with separately, and in a similar manner. If the sentence to be parsed has been judiciously selected, little direct help will be required from the teacher except in the way of leading the children to exercise their reasoning powers, and to think for themselves. Analysis of sentences is taught only in Standards V. and VI. Teachers, however, will find it to their advantage to introduce this subject at a much earlier stage. The grammar lessons of Standard III. should be based on the analysis of the simple sentence; and every parsing exercise in Standard IV. should be preceded by the analysis of the selected passage. The only technical terms that need be introduced in classes below Standard V. are subject, predicate, and object. The pupils of Standard IV. should be trained to state the functions of the phrases that form the enlargements and the extensions, and to indicate in the case of each the part of speech it has the force of. A skilful teacher will be able to go a step further, and to lead his pupils to perceive the relations that the clauses of an easy sentence bear to one another. The practical object of grammatical teaching—viz., composition—seems to be lost sight of by many teachers. This subject I have very carefully examined, and the results have been, on the whole, disappointing, more especially in Standards III. and IV. In all the time tables that have come under my notice a certain proportion of the school time is set apart for the teaching of composition. The indifferent results must be the outcome either of a non-adherence to the time table, and a total neglect of the subject, or of a failure on the part of teachers to arrange and graduate the course of instruction. The children must be taught in the first place what is and what is not a sentence. At first, therefore, a large number of lessons must be devoted to exercising the children in building up simple sentences, and in the proper use of capital letters. For a time nothing else should be required of them. They will then be shown how to combine two or more of those simple sentences by means of connective words. Children are apt to form into one long sentence a series of totally unrelated