

Again, I have often at inspection visits heard teachers put the very objectionable questions found in the reader, to which the pupil would reply in the exact words of the book:—*e.g.*,—Teacher: "What did George say?" Pupil: "I cannot tell a lie, father; I did it." This kind of work is worse than useless, for it in no way improves the pupil's comprehension of the passage read, while it tends to make him read by rote.

Spelling, for some reason or another, continues to be a weak subject in this district. The test given is by no means severe, for in dictation I invariably select a passage free from any puzzling words, and this is dictated by the teacher of the school, and is read in all three times, while the separate words given are of the very commonest. Many of the errors found were the result of sheer carelessness (it is surprising how few pupils look over their papers), but I frequently noticed even pupils in the upper standards unable to divide a word into its syllables, to recognise vowel sounds, or to spell such common terminations of abstract nouns and of adjectives as *-ion*, *-ble*, *-ous*, &c. Spelling would improve, I think, if reading were taught more by the phonic method in the lower classes, and if pupils were practised in recognising the powers of letters. Too much is told to the children in the upper standards. For example, in reading lessons I often heard a teacher tell a boy at once a word not known, and I found even Standard IV. pupils unable to distinguish consonants from vowels, and not aware that every syllable must have a vowel in it. When in oral spelling a pupil makes a mistake, and another pupil spells the word correctly, the teacher should take care that the substituted letters are well emphasized, and that the correct spelling is impressed upon the class in other ways, as by calling on another pupil to answer, by writing the word on the blackboard, &c.

Writing, I am pleased to be able to say, is a very strong subject in this district, except at a few schools. Of this I felt especially convinced after seeing school work from all parts of the colony at the New Zealand Exhibition. Even in Standard II. and Standard III. I have received at several schools writing on foolscap almost perfect as regards attention to style. In school more attention might be paid to such details as the manner of holding the pen, the position of the body, and the pushing upwards on the desk of the copybook before the bottom line is written. The examination papers at most schools were written very neatly indeed. I should like to hear of some teachers entering their pupils' work for Vere Foster's national competition.

In *Arithmetic* the percentage of passes for all classes is 74. Standard III. showed an improvement of over 10 per cent.; but in Standards IV., V., and VI. the percentages have materially declined, partly owing to the reasons already stated. In Standard VI. too much time is frittered away in teaching rules that probably a boy will never have anything to do with hereafter, but which, if occasion should require, he would be able to master in a few days supposing him to have been well "grounded" at school. The finding of areas when the measurements are given in chains and links might receive more attention in this standard, and the sums should be worked by the decimal method, not by vulgar fractions. In Standard V. pupils broke down most frequently in fractions, and, strange to say, in this rule a problem was oftener worked correctly than a little sum involving merely addition and subtraction. In Standard IV. reduction and other sums in weights and measures were the great trouble, and in practice dividing into the wrong line was very common. Also I noticed that pupils frequently confused lineal measure and square measure. In Standards III. and II. pupils often failed in sums through laziness in comprehending the wording of the questions, so that they worked multiplication for division, and *vice versa*. In Standard III. errors were very frequent, as usual, in simple long division and in simple long multiplication, those in the former rule generally being in the subtraction; but I confess I was surprised to find addition of money very often inaccurate. In the money sums I frequently noticed that the errors were due to calculating ten pence to the shilling—that is, confusing abstract and concrete numbers. In Standard I. the slate work generally was very good in schools of any pretensions whatever, and in many the sums were exceedingly well put down. In oral work in Standard III. I found that teachers in many schools had forgotten to teach long measure. In Standards I. and II. the aliquot parts and relative lengths required by the syllabus should receive more attention, for I found that they were generally learned by rote. Thus, at school after school my height was guessed at from 2ft. to 12ft. I have asked teachers to make this work as practical as possible, and to mark various lengths and heights plainly upon the school wall. When a few pupils have been measured against the wall before their classfellows no one in the class will ever be likely to make a senseless mistake with regard to height.

Failures in arithmetic in the upper standards are not, in my opinion (and, I believe, in the opinion of most teachers also), due to the difficulty of the examination cards, for there are on every card sufficient plain and direct questions to enable a pupil to pass by answering them alone. In addition to these questions there are, of course, one or two more difficult, in the nature of problems (so called), which are given with a view to discover the smartest children in the class, and to test the range of the teaching, and which all are not expected to answer. I very carefully avoid setting any sums which may be thought "catches," or sums that involve remainders and large fractions, while the pupils are warned against making mistakes by the printing on the cards of certain words in bold type. At the same time sums are worded in such a manner as to discourage rote work. For example, in Standard II., "Find the difference between 684,074 and 78,450," not "Subtract 78,450 from 684,074."

One of the chief ways to improve the arithmetic in the upper classes would be, it appears to me, to give more *viva voce* teaching, with a plentiful use of the blackboard. Pupils should receive a great deal of practice in simply stating how certain sums are to be solved: thus, "Given selling price and buying price, find profit or loss," the answer "Profit = selling price - buying price;" "Loss = buying price - selling price," should come at once. Or, again, "Area of floor = length $\times$ breadth;" "Length of carpet = area of floor $\div$ breadth of carpet;" "Area of walls = twice height $\times$ sum of length and breadth." In working these sums the writing for any line should be