

the corresponding number presented was fifteen, twelve of whom, including the whole of Standard VI., failed in this same subject, making, therefore, the percentage of failures for it eighty. Coming then to Stafford we have nineteen failing out of twenty-six presented, or a percentage of seventy-three, and here, as before, the whole of Standard VI. succumbed. And, lastly, in the case of the second largest school in the district—I mean, of course, Kumara—the net number presented in the three standards was sixty-two, of whom no less than forty-four, including the whole of Standard V., failed in this essential subject, whilst more than half the forty-four did not get one single sum right. Nor does that represent the worst of the case in respect to this school, as it has still to be mentioned that no less than sixteen scholars were absent from examination altogether in these three classes alone.

I have already shown what I hold to be the principal cause of the large measure of failure here chronicled, and therefore need not again refer to it; there are, however, one or two minor causes in the case of arithmetic which it seems desirable to enumerate, the first being the employment by the scholars of clumsy and obsolete methods of calculation. I allude more particularly to a practice which prevails almost universally in the schools—a practice of performing addition of fractions by first reducing mixed numbers to improper fractions, a method which I had hoped had disappeared fifty years since altogether, along with Walkingame's arithmetic. The use of this plan makes the sums so large and clumsy that children can hardly escape making errors.

Another cause of the poor results produced in arithmetic, and perhaps in the other two subjects also, is the unusually short time allotted to the subject in the time-tables of the schools. Thus I find that in most of the schools only four and a half hours a week are devoted to arithmetic, instead of the seven and a half hours which are often given to it in other education districts. For the sake of the intellectual discipline which the study of the subject furnishes, as well as for its practical utility, it is most imperative that, in primary schools at least, a considerable fraction of the school-day should be devoted to arithmetic. It may almost be said to be the principal subject which children are sent to school to learn, and to suppose that less than an hour a day will meet the requirements of the case is absurd.

On the subject of grammar I will not linger, though an additional cause of failure here has been the unsuitable text-books which have, up to a month or two ago, been in use in this education district; but as the Board has already removed this source of weakness, it is unnecessary to say any more about it. On one error in grammar, however, of almost universal prevalence in the schools of the district I must make a comment, as it exactly matches the antiquated arithmetic to which I have already referred. It is a new illustration of the force of habit, since it can hardly be from want of the requisite knowledge on the part of teachers, at least in the case of many of them, that they have tolerated the error in question in their schools. What I refer to is this, that in their parsing exercises the children have been allowed—I will not say taught—to call everything ending in *ing* a present participle, a practice which could only be paralleled had they been encouraged to dignify with the name of “gold” everything that possessed a bright-yellow colour.

And now for geography. This is the subject which has suffered most from the general cause of failure already more than once referred to. Indeed, judging by the answers and lack of answers I have found in the examination papers of the scholars, I have been forced to the conviction that the study of geography has been almost *systematically* neglected in many schools, and that there has been little actual teaching of the subject, so that even where it has not been neglected altogether, it has too often been suffered to degenerate into the mere conning of a text-book by the children. From many proofs of this I select the following incident for quotation. The class under examination was the Sixth Standard, and my question was this: “Write down the names of five towns situated on the River Mississippi or its tributaries.” The head teacher thought this was a question to which he had a right to object on the ground that he was not sure that the text-book in use contained five cities so situated, he being apparently quite unaware of the fact that there was such a thing as a school-map, that the study of geography ought to be the study of a map, and that a class of Sixth Standard scholars could hardly have pored over a map of America for a twelvemonth without knowing the names of several cities situated on the banks of the principal streams. The gulf between theory and practice is proverbially a wide one, but it is surely high time that in Government schools, taught by men who may all be presumed to have passed at least one examination in the art of teaching, this idolatry of the text-book should be obsolete, at least in connection with geography. There are few mental employments more repulsive or more useless than that of committing to memory lists of geographical names from a text-book, nor can we wonder that a class should break down in geography on examination-day where such a practice prevails. This Board provides its schools liberally with maps: it has a right, therefore, to expect that the subject of geography should be taught orally by the teacher, and that the text-book should be relegated to a very subordinate place.

One other defect in the geographical teaching of the district probably only needs to be mentioned in order to be corrected. I allude to the general ignorance that seems to prevail amongst scholars in regard to the resources possessed by our own colony. For instance, I have often asked a class to enumerate the chief exports of New Zealand, but not even in the Sixth or Seventh Standard do the scholars seem to be aware that a chief export of New Zealand is *wool*.

I have already referred to the results collected in Table III., the table that shows the percentage of passes obtained by the whole district in each standard subject. But this table will assist us in determining another question as well. It is quite possible that some may suppose that the great increase in the percentage of standard failures this year may be due, at least in part, to the increased difficulty of the questions set by the Inspector. With the help of Table III., however, it is easy to show that such is by no means the case. In this table I have given not only the percentage of passes in each subject, but the mean of these, which is 74·3, making the mean percentage of failures in subjects 25·7. If now you will turn to Table IV. of last year's report, which is the