

passes in the seven "pass" subjects, a still more satisfactory improvement is revealed. The only subject showing a falling-off is spelling, and that only to the extent of 2 per cent. The improvements in the other subjects amount to 1 per cent. on reading, 9 per cent. on writing, 13 per cent. on arithmetic, 18 per cent. on grammar and composition, 20 per cent. on drawing, and 25 per cent. on geography.

The increase of the passes in drawing is a peculiarly gratifying feature of the examination, as it shows that strenuous efforts have been made by most of the teachers to meet what by many of them is regarded as a very exorbitant demand upon their time and attention. The action of the Board in allowing scholars to be examined by the Wellington School of Art has, I am sure, stimulated many teachers to persevere with this, to many, troublesome subject; and the opportunity would have been taken advantage of more extensively but for a mistaken idea that the scholars would be required to pay the examination-fee. Next year I expect many more will be presented for examination at Wellington.

In the "class" and "additional" subjects a considerable improvement is also evident in most schools, as shown in the "combined results;" and this indicates a laudable effort on the part of teachers to carry out the programme of instruction in its entirety, and will perhaps account in some instances for a larger percentage of failures in "pass" subjects than has usually been recorded.

The percentage of failures, though more easily "understood of the people," is not so reliable as an indication of efficiency as many would imagine. Some remarkable illustrations of this occur this year, the most noteworthy perhaps being the case of the Renwick School. In 1891, out of 104 children presented on the roll, 52 passed in standards. In 1892, out of 100 presented, 55 passed. Yet the percentage of failures in 1891 was 7, and for 1892 is 14! There is no doubt that in this instance, and perhaps in most others, the percentage of *passes* shows more nearly the actual condition of the school, for Renwick still maintains the excellent reputation it has so long enjoyed. The explanation of this apparent anomaly is that last year the scholars outside the standards (the preparatory classes and the classes above Standard VI.) were 43 per cent. of the roll-number, while this year they were only 34 per cent. The remarks under clause 10 of the "Regulations for the Inspection of Schools," are well exemplified by the above and somewhat similar cases in this district.

Of the thirty-eight schools examined, seventeen show above 25 per cent. of failures. Three of these, Okaramio, Spring Creek, and Wairau Valley, had not long been in charge of their present teachers, and the results show a marked improvement on the past, with every promise of a satisfactory performance in the future. Nydia Bay was experimented on by two teachers during the year, neither of whom was successful. In the cases of the Tua Marina, Fairhall, and Havelock Suburban Schools, the past record of their teachers' work and my own knowledge of the admirable manner in which they are conducted, justify me in believing that the falling-off is only temporary, and is due to circumstances outside the control of the teacher. The fact of having so unusually low a percentage of passes will be a sufficient motive for a vigorous effort to replace these schools on their accustomed footing. As regards the Blenheim Girls', Springlands, Canvastown, Birchwood, and Waikakaho Schools, something more is evidently required.

Under clause 5 of the new regulations the Inspector is required to report on the number of scholars above eight years of age who are not presented in Standard I. I find the total number of such scholars to be 161. I do not know how it may be in other districts, as this information has never been supplied before, but it seems to me that the number is enormously out of proportion to the total roll-number. It amounts to 8 per cent. of the roll-number, and 23 per cent. of the whole of the preparatory classes in the district. The reasons assigned for their presence in the preparatory classes were: Unfit for Standard I., 50; irregular attendance, 28; late admission, 29; and various other causes, 54. Blenheim Junior School contributes 67 to the total. The reason, unfit for Standard I., is somewhat vague, and next year I shall require some more definite explanation. Amongst the "other reasons" were "weak intellect," "truant playing," "weak eyesight," and with these are included some for whom no reason was assigned.

In all the standards this year, with the exception of the sixth, I adopted the method of marking the results in each subject followed by my predecessor, *i.e.*, by P or F only, instead of by marks as I have hitherto done, and this will in some measure account for the apparently inferior results obtained at some of the larger schools. Spelling, drawing, and arithmetic are the subjects which caused the most of the failures.

I have much pleasure in referring to the very excellent work that is done at some of the small aided schools in this district. Having an intense objection to the modern practice of smothering with fulsome praise any one who simply does his duty, I refrain from mentioning names; but there are some teachers in out-of-the-way places whose work would stand comparison with that of many holding far more important positions. Three of these little schools passed all their scholars in every subject, besides giving a good account of themselves in the class and additional subjects; and at several others the results were little inferior to the three alluded to.

*Irregularity of Attendance.*—I have already referred to this subject in the case of the Blenheim Girls' School, but though the evil exists there in a very aggravated form, it is more or less concerned with the short-comings of the district generally. Leaving out the preparatory classes, where the irregularity is even more prevalent than in the standard classes, I find that 11 per cent. of the scholars examined have attended less than half time; but, as before observed, this does not give a true idea of the waste of teaching-power involved. By the Government Regulations a child needs to attend only one-half of the three quarters immediately preceding the examination. Now, even if we allow that he attended the whole of the first quarter of the year, he still is supposed to accomplish the work of the whole year in five-eighths of a year. But, as a matter of fact, the first quarter after an examination is usually marked by a very irregular attendance. I have reason to suspect that this