

presented in standards, and 12,720, or somewhat more than 79 per cent., passed. The percentage of pupils that passed has thus risen $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. since last year. The improvement thus indicated is, however, more apparent than real, as head teachers have this year passed a good many pupils in Standards I. and II. who would not have been passed by the Inspectors, while during the latter part of the year pupils who in former years would have failed because they did badly in one subject have been allowed to pass. So far as mere statistics carry us, the condition of the schools seems to be much the same as it was last year. The subjects in which the great majority of the failures occurred were dictation, arithmetic, composition, and geography.

The mean of the average ages has risen by two and a half months, and the ages at which the several standards have been passed are higher in every class except Standard II. In Standards VI. and IV the advance has been considerable (seven months and five months respectively), and cannot be readily accounted for.

The class-subjects now include grammar, history, science, and object-lessons in all classes, and geography in Standard II. The results in these are classed as "good" in 24 schools, "satisfactory" in 97, "fair" in 125, "moderate" in 66, and "inferior" in 3. Additional subjects are more satisfactory, the results being "good" in 60 schools, "satisfactory" in 151, "fair" in 90, and "moderate" in 14. In one school, owing to very special circumstances, no work in class or additional subjects was presented.

The number of pupils over eight years of age who were not presented for Standard I. was 1,754, a somewhat smaller percentage of the total number on the roll than that of recent years. The reasons assigned for the backward condition of these pupils were with few exceptions satisfactory, so far as persons not intimately acquainted with the circumstances could judge.

As I have not yet seen any large number of the schools of the district, I cannot express any very general opinions on the intelligence, accuracy, and thoroughness of the teaching, but I may be allowed to lay before you a few general impressions, gathered from my experience of the schools which I have visited or examined. I should be glad to believe that these impressions would have been favourably modified by a wider knowledge of the Board's schools.

Various indications point to the prevalence of a considerable want of intelligence and of educative aim and purpose, both in methods of teaching, and in the direction of study. Among these the abuse of model or pattern reading may be noticed first. It is a very common practice to give model reading with every paragraph of a new reading-lesson, the assumption being that pupils cannot read the sentences with satisfactory readiness and expression without such assistance. But, for pupils who are fairly abreast of their work such direction and help should be needed only occasionally. If they are really necessary for every sentence and paragraph, the fact raises a strong presumption that there is something seriously amiss in the management and teaching. It practically means that the pupils are engaged on work for which they are not ready, and with which they cannot deal in an educative or intelligent spirit. If they were prepared for the lessons on which they are engaged they could handle them readily enough, without all this help and coaching. In reading no less than in other subjects we want to get our scholars out of leading-strings as soon as possible. To encumber them with help that they can easily be trained to do without, can do nothing but harm, for it stunts the spirit of self-help and self-reliance, which it is one of the chief aims of education to foster and develop.

Evidence to the same effect is afforded by the brief, fragmentary, and badly-constructed answers that are so generally and so complacently received. This unsatisfactory answering is, no doubt, partly traceable to a want of varied and skilful questioning, but it seems mainly due to the slight importance which teachers attach to training their pupils to give full answers, stated in clear and explicit terms. No one objects to short answers where short answers are sufficient. But in skilful questioning, questions that cannot be answered in a word or two are constantly given, and from an early stage the pupils should be trained to deal adequately with these. This training, so valuable and necessary, seems to be much neglected. Careful attention to it cannot fail to greatly improve the education given in the public schools.

It is, however, in the teaching of the earlier stages of grammar that the disregard for educative aim and purpose specially shows itself. The teaching here has appeared to me singularly mechanical and uninteresting, and to fail almost wholly in developing the fine logical training that a skilful handling of the subject is so well fitted to give. In my view, every lesson in elementary grammar should afford exercise in the clear interpretation of the language used, and in precise reasoning from it. At every step mere guesswork should be excluded by the adoption and habitual use of methods that are incompatible with it. The basis of all teaching of the subject should be a thorough understanding of the meaning of the sentence or passage under consideration. To secure this understanding a careful examination of the contents of the sentence, in the shape of a rough logical analysis of them, should be undertaken first of all. This will show and, if necessary, discover and teach the full meaning of what is to be discussed. The use or function of each word, or of certain cardinal classes of words, can now be readily worked out, when the words can be referred with certainty to their proper groups or parts of speech. The rough analysis above referred to is nothing very formidable, as the name might perhaps suggest. It means nothing more than pointing out for each sentence "what we say something about," and "what we say or affirm about this person or thing", in other words, the "subject" and the "complete predicate," and in longer sentences pointing out further the statements which the sentence contains. The terms "subject" and "predicate" should not be used at first, but they are so convenient that they may be introduced as soon as pupils fully understand what they denote. Any intelligent handling of grammar must, I consider, be based on some such procedure as is here sketched. To attempt even the simplest parsing of an easy sentence without a thorough comprehension of its sense can lead only to guesswork—a process antagonistic to mental training of any kind, yet it is work of this character that passes for the teaching of grammar in Standards III. and IV in nearly all the schools with which I have yet come in contact.