

*Pass-subjects.*—Reading continues to improve. I must say, however, that in some schools the teacher does not aim at any standard of quality beyond what he thinks will meet the requirement for a pass. With the object of fostering a desire for reading amongst the pupils, copies of suitable and interesting books prepared for class reading have been procured for distribution among the schools, and it is to be hoped that these books will be effectively used, and be the means of encouraging the majority of the pupils to read more than they do.

The dictation tests have been as well answered as formerly but I cannot speak so favourably of the preparation of the spelling-lessons, which I am certain has fallen away from its former creditable position. The sooner the new regulation confining the tests to dictation alone in the senior standards is rescinded the better will it be for the efficiency of the preparation of the scholars in this subject.

A number of the writing tests are by no means equal to those of past years. There can be no doubt the supervision is not always what it ought to be. Many of the tests done for me were wanting in careful detail and finish, while occasionally the ill-formed letters and the crowded and cramped treatment, along with a poor style of setting out the work, showed weak methods and an absence of energy in the teaching. An exhibition of the good and bad work done during the year might have some good effect in levelling up its quality and treatment in the future.

The test cards in arithmetic supplied by the department have been well answered by Standard III. Standards VI. and IV. did not do so well, and Standard V., whose work in the subject has been the weakest for years past, did very indifferently. In a few of the schools the preparation, judged by the results, could have been treated in only a very imperfect way. It may be the number of problems in each card was the cause of an almost total breakdown in one or two schools. At any rate, the results show the folly of trusting to the slipshod treatment which this subject, as well as composition, receives at the hands of those teachers who attempt to teach without a step by step thoroughness of preparation. I purposely avoided the distribution of the previous year's examination cards, in the hope that the subject would be more liberally treated.

In composition very good work was more frequently met with than formerly. Wherever systematic supervision was coupled with the instruction the results were forthcoming. Indeed, in many instances the fairly creditable work of the year testifies to the degree of proficiency attained in not a few schools. I cannot, however, report on the paraphrasing in favourable terms. The work in Standard V. was not even moderately well done by the majority of the scholars.

Some weakness was evident in the geography of Standard IV. This may be the outcome of the short time teachers had to prepare for its treatment as a pass-subject. The work in Standard V. was a decided improvement on past effort. The successful preparation of physical and mathematical geography is still confined to a few schools whose teachers really take an interest in the subject. In general the answering, however, is too meagre to be of any real use.

The examination of Standards I. and II. by the head teacher has done little to lessen the Inspector's work of examination. It may do so in districts where the schools are large, but, with so many small ones, I would rather, when an opinion has to be expressed on the preparation of these classes, the old system of examination by the Inspector had continued. I fear there will be discontent before long among the teachers, as all do not take the same care or exercise the best judgment in promoting their pupils. The Inspector should have power to prohibit the promotion of any scholar whose advancement is not deserved. Occasionally there were evidences of less care than there has been in the past in the instruction of these standards. The effects of this neglect may appear in the results of a higher standard in the year now entered upon.

*Class-subjects.*—The instruction in grammar may be said to be confined to the work done in Standard III. and to a few schools where the teaching of the subject in the other standards is honourably attended to. History continues to receive a fair share of attention, and frequently the interest shown during the oral examinations is a proof that the subject is popular. In Standard II. geography has very seldom been reported as unsatisfactory. Object-lessons on common things are given regularly to the lower classes, and lessons on elementary science or the principles of agriculture to the higher standards, but too often the questioning fails to train the children either to describe what they see or to draw their own conclusions. The schemes of lessons should aim at the imparting of connected information through a systematic arrangement for the year. Very often the lessons are given without visible illustrations or apparatus of any kind. To some extent this defect may now be overcome, as, in response to a request made to a number of the principal manufacturers of the Home-country a variety of specimens, illustrating raw materials and their manufactures into textile and other fabrics, have been supplied, in most cases gratuitously. The specimens, several of them in handsome cases, will be distributed to the larger schools as centres from which they may be loaned as they are required. Longmans' "Practical Mental Arithmetic" has been of much real service in the district. It has directed the teaching out of the stereotyped grooves of the past, and laid a good foundation in a number of schools.

*Additional Subjects.*—Military drill and the exercises of the Swedish system are taught in a few schools with very satisfactory results. The teaching of singing is confined to the larger schools, in two or three of which part-singing is exceedingly well done. Sewing is specially reported upon by the ladies' sewing committee. The comprehension of the language of the reading-lessons is frequently but scantily treated. This work should take a higher place than that in which it is classed.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to thank the teachers for their co-operation and good feeling, which have largely contributed to whatever success has attended my labours in the guidance and control of the educational work of the district. And now, after eleven years' service, during which the standard examination work, as shown by the number of passes, has more than doubled itself, I ask for my successor that support and confidence which the Board has at all times given to me.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, New Plymouth.

WILLIAM MURRAY, Inspector