

those for the previous year, so the passes were more numerous. Failure was found most frequently in some of the very varied examples in tables. The fact of some of the examples in reduction permitting of answers in several denominations caused us no small amount of trouble. In the examination-tests in this standard we think in future it would be well to give more prominence to bills of parcels and practice at the expense of some of the puzzles in tables. To expect pupils in Standard IV. to express in troy a weight given in avoirdupois is, to our minds, decidedly straining the regulations. In Standard III. the work varied very much, and this no doubt was partly due to the great unevenness of the tests. Some of the tests were so simple that it was possible for a pupil to obtain a pass by merely writing down a simple table and a piece of numeration and notation, and working a Standard II. sum in abstract numbers, which was not even in problem form. Or, again, it was possible for a pupil to work correctly four sums out of five and still not have done a money sum. Yet in this standard the four money rules are supposed to be known, and they are, in fact, the only new rules besides simple long division and simple long multiplication. But, easy as most of the tests were, the work far too often was very moderate. Gross carelessness, we think, was frequently the cause of this. We cannot, for instance, believe that many pupils were ignorant of the meaning of the terms "sum" and "product," for we ourselves invariably use these terms when setting questions even in Standard I. and Standard II.; yet more frequently than not they were misapplied. In some cases the wording of a sum was responsible for pupils not attempting it. When a Standard III. pupil reads such a sum as this: "An intestate estate was divided equally between the widow and two children, so that each got £873 6s. 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.; what was the whole estate worth?" he passes it by because the "big word" frightens him. And in this connection we may say that we frequently received complaints about the wording of many of the cards in various standards.

In mental arithmetic we found a very decided improvement in all classes.

Before leaving the subject of arithmetic, we should like to point out, for the information of the authorities, that the sets of cards issued at different times varied very much in difficulty. Also, we desire to record our opinion that the time necessary to render Standard VI. pupils quite at home with the many varied questions now set in the so-called commercial rules—we doubt if there is a commercial man in the town knows what true discount is supposed to be—might be spent far more profitably in arithmetic affecting farming operations, for instance. In Standard V. we think compound proportion and difficult cases in interest might well be omitted, and so allow of pupils getting a thorough grasp of first principles and vulgar fractions.

Composition.—Upon this subject we regret we cannot report in favourable terms. The essays and letters often were of the briefest, and frequently they were evidently mere feats of memory—for which, by the way, little or no credit was allowed. At several schools the teachers submitted to us a list of a very few subjects upon which the pupils had written during the year; and when we included one of the subjects upon a list of four or five set on the blackboard, such one was invariably selected by all, or nearly all, the pupils, and the exercises were almost word for word alike. Again, when the subject of a reading-lesson was set, the majority of pupils wrote the exact words of the text, or produced almost verbatim the summary at the end of the lesson, instead of telling in their own words what they remembered of the story. In future, unless a fair number of subjects for a year's work is presented to us, we shall not consider ourselves justified in setting one of them. Carelessness frequently was very much in evidence in the essays, and it was of the kind that reflects adversely upon the teachers, showing as it did a want of thoroughness in their work in the direction of consistently and carefully marking all exercises, and requiring the pupils to re-write corrected passages. In Standard IV. the requirements of the syllabus with regard to sentence-making evidently had not received due attention, for very frequently the questions on the cards bearing on this subject were not attempted, or, when attempted, were poorly answered. At paraphrasing in Standard V. and Standard VI. poor attempts were made, the pupils not grasping the meanings of the passages given. So simple and so generally well known were these passages that we think mental laziness had something to do with failure.

There is no subject that requires more actual teaching than composition, and perhaps no subject that receives less, the pupils being left to themselves while the teacher is engaged with a reading class. It is not sufficient that exercises should be corrected privately by the teacher, and then be returned without comment to the pupils, who may know or may not know the significance of the marking. The exercises should be criticized before the class, the pupils' aid being largely invoked, and the blackboard being freely used for illustration. A good plan is to get the pupils themselves to read the exercises aloud, and to encourage criticism, with reasons, from all members of the class. Exercises should be written at some subsequent time in corrected form. In oral work teachers should insist upon the thoughts always being expressed in complete statements, for this is a powerful aid to written composition. Questions, accordingly, should be so framed as to elicit connected statements of some length embodying several particulars in one whole.

Geography.—The remarks made on this subject in the last annual report are again applicable. While political and commercial geography continue to be well taught in the majority of the schools, it is still necessary to urge the necessity for attention to physical and mathematical geography, in which more intelligent teaching, as opposed to memory work, is required. In physical geography, when descriptions of the river-systems of continents were required, we generally received merely lists of the names of the rivers; while descriptions of the surface features of continents were very meagre, and showed no intelligent grasp of the internal configuration of such continents. The causes of different climate were readily enough enumerated, but particular questions with reference to these causes were poorly answered. Thus, the effect on the climate of the west coast of New Zealand of the prevailing winds being westerly was very vaguely known. In mathematical geography a lack of intelligence in answers was still more evident. To the question "What alteration in day and night would occur were the earth to cease revolving, the rotation continuing?" hardly one correct answer was obtained. A very common answer to this question was that day