

duties. We do not wish that a shorter time should be given to arithmetic. Indeed, in the matter of "mental" arithmetic there is much need of more attention; and, so long as the "pious opinion" of the advantages of a decimal system remains only an opinion, the subject as a whole cannot do with less. But we plead for a fuller recognition of the fact that the master's best mental work in a school is to be found in the evidences of his influence on the general intelligence of the children—in other words, in the degree of culture he produces. The influence may not be easily expressed in terms of "passes," or by way of numerical estimates of the value of subjects taught; but it is very real all the same, is readily recognised by the Inspector, and, whether referred to in his report or not, forms one of the chief factors of the estimation in which he holds the teacher.

Grammar and composition are connected by an indissoluble tie, though the subjects are differently treated in the regulations. We do not question the wisdom of the dissociation. Circumstances have made it necessary, and the result is that, while composition has improved very materially up to a certain stage, approximately that of the Fourth Standard, and to a less extent in the higher stages, the grammar has gone sadly backward. The lessons given have been commonly reduced in number; the treatment in a great majority of cases is of a very perfunctory kind, or dependence may be found placed on written exercises alone without any set lesson at all. We regret very much the loss of the mental training that grammar affords. Our school work will find it difficult to supply its place as a means of constant training in simple reasoning, and as the instrument by which clearness of perception and habits of careful discrimination are secured. Grammar, however, as a disciplinary exercise must now be regarded as a thing of the past, if it ever was really well enough treated for this purpose, and it remains only that we should so adjust its study as to bear most directly on its practical application in composition. With our present syllabus in the subject we cannot continue much longer. The difficulties in the Fifth and Sixth Standards are growing year by year, and, however anxious a teacher in these classes may be to do justice to the prescribed programme, the want of a solid foundation on which to work meets him on every hand. To sketch out a new scheme is not now our province, and we can only suggest that in any modified plan the structure of sentences (including those of some complexity) treated by way both of analysis and synthesis, and the use of a few simple rules of syntax dealing with the concord of verb and subject, and with the relations of the pronoun, should form very prominent features. At present the general structure of the complex sentence is the feature which is worst appreciated, and in the composition blunders in concords are much too frequent when the evidences of literary ability and of other technical details are most satisfactory.

At inspection our attention has chiefly been directed to the usual features, and we have been asked to take special notice of the means adopted to make the rooms cheerful and attractive. In this respect there is often much to commend, and generally we may say that, in our opinion, the surroundings of the children during their life in school, and the attention given to their physical comfort, are such as older countries might envy.

We have, &c.,

L. B. WOOD, M.A.,
W. J. ANDERSON, LL.D., } Inspectors.
THOS. RITCHIE, B.A., }

The Chairman, Education Board, North Canterbury.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 3rd March, 1896.

I have the honour to present my report on the schools in this district for the year 1895.

Sixty-five schools have been in operation during the year. Details of the examinations of these schools will be found in the tables attached to this report.

In accordance with the Board's instructions, I paid a visit without notice to each of the five Roman Catholic schools in this district, and afterwards conducted their examinations in the manner prescribed for the public schools. The numerical results are stated in Appendix III.; but, with the exception of what is stated therein, any tables or remarks that I may bring forward in the course of this report deal exclusively with the public schools.

The following table shows the results of the examinations for the whole district:—

Classes.				Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
							Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	93	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	279	273	233	13 11
" V.	...	...	...	453	441	342	13 1
" IV.	...	...	...	671	647	490	12 1
" III.	...	...	...	796	764	617	11 0
" II.	...	...	...	722	699	670	9 9
" I.	...	...	...	622	615	607	8 9
Preparatory	...	...	...	1,587	...	...	...
Totals for 1895...				5,223	3,439	2,959	*11 5
Totals for 1894...				5,111	3,358	2,733	*11 6

* Mean of average age.