

The least successful of the pass-subjects was composition. In not more than a dozen schools was it generally good throughout the classes. The exercises in the Third Standard were in a great many cases so well done that we may look for steady improvement as the younger children pass on to the higher classes. Not enough has yet been done in the practice of constructing complex sentences by the blending of given simple sentences. This exercise is prescribed for Standard IV.; but its importance as one of the ways the teacher can make use of in dealing with a subject of special difficulty to the majority of school-children should insure its continuance in Standards V. and VI.

The teaching of geography continues to improve. It was quite exceptional to find a class badly prepared, and the full and intelligent knowledge shown in a great many schools made the work of examining the classes light and pleasant.

Freehand drawing is fairly satisfactory in most schools, and exceedingly good in the upper classes of some of the larger schools. Plane geometry in the Fourth and scale-drawing in the Fifth Standard were generally well done. In very few schools did the model-drawing of the Sixth Standard possess much merit, but it was not uncommon to find the boys of this standard with a good understanding of the principles of solid drawing. The junior classes were usually well prepared for the examination in knowledge of geometrical form.

Class-subjects.—Among the class-subjects grammar is the most important and the worst taught. The weakness did not show itself in Standard III.; it was distinctly manifest in Standard IV.; it was so pronounced in Standards V. and VI. that it was a pleasant experience to come on a set of good papers amid the waste of worthless rubbish, and one was heartily glad to accept this evidence that the skilful treatment of the lessons in grammar—the logic of the common school—was not altogether a lost art. In history the scholars answered fairly well when questioned on one of the lessons of the prepared list; but under the present system, though they may carry away a varying amount of historical information, they are not likely to have established in their minds “an outline that may be filled in by later reading.” Some good work was done here and there in elementary science, and something of the nature of science-lessons was professed in every school. A well-given object-lesson is still a rarity.

Additional Subjects.—The scholars have drill and extension exercises in fifty-three schools. In the large schools particularly the movements are done with precision and vigour. The senior boys of the Timaru Main School go through a useful series of setting-up drill with dumb-bells, and the girls are expert in Indian-club exercise. In twenty-two schools the children work on day after day and week after week without once singing a song. In most of the others a few songs are fairly well sung, while in some the singing is exceptionally good. Needlework is for the most part very well taught. The scholars usually do well in recitation. A good deal requires to be done in training the scholars to answer well during the oral examination on the meaning of the language of the reading-lessons.

On more than one occasion in previous reports I have commented unfavourably on the position we occupied relatively to some other education districts, and to the colony as a whole, in the matter of regularity of attendance. Our reproach is taken away. In 1891 and 1892 we were almost up to the average for the colony, which was 80 per cent. of the roll. In 1893 the average for the colony declined to 78·5; in that year we stood at 79·6. In 1894 the average for the colony was 80·6; our average was 82·6, second to Otago with 84·9. Our average for the past year is 84·2, and with this we should be able to hold our second place. This is an honourable position to have attained; let us try for the most honourable.

I have much pleasure in again reporting favourably on the order and discipline of the schools, and on the manners and general behaviour of the scholars.

I have, &c.,

JAMES GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, South Canterbury.

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Education Office, 14th March, 1896.

We have the honour to submit our report on the schools of the district for the year 1895. Owing to causes already explained to the Board, forty of the schools remained unexamined at the end of the year. These have now been examined, but the statistics of their examination are not included in those given below. Table I. summarises the examination results of the Board's schools, and Table II. those of the Catholic schools, for the year 1895.

TABLE I.

Classes.				Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age.
							Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	555	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	1,282	1,254	1,188	14 1
" V.	...	...	...	1,975	1,920	1,668	13 2
" IV.	...	...	...	2,683	2,607	2,205	12 3
" III.	...	...	...	2,902	2,830	2,507	11 1
" II.	...	...	...	2,710	2,672	2,571	9 11
" I.	...	...	...	2,470	2,445	2,415	8 10
Preparatory ...	...	...	...	6,581	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	...	21,158	13,728	12,554	11 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ *

* Mean of average ages.