

took the work in hand. Although Standard IV. has improved it shows the lowest percentage: arithmetic and geography were the subjects most frequently responsible for failure. The pupils in Standard I. and Standard II. were classified by the teachers. In the four other standards the number passed by us expressed as a percentage of the number examined is 75.3.

In the column showing ages of pupils the figures are very deceptive. If a few bush schools, where the ages were abnormally high, were left out the averages would be much lower than at present.

*Instruction.*—We have little new to write under this heading. Any teacher might take up the reports for the past five or six years, and he would find the majority of the remarks under "Instruction" more or less applicable again this year. Still, a few remarks will not be out of place.

Reading continues to improve as far as purely mechanical difficulties are concerned, yet still we often find that pupils who meet with an unfamiliar word are unable to break it up into its syllables and make a reasonable attempt at its full pronunciation. Expressive reading, showing an intelligent knowledge of the meaning of the text, is almost as rare as ever, and we are convinced that this will always be so as long as only one reading-book—and that an inferior one—is used in twelve months. We do not often fail a pupil in reading, but we are quite satisfied that, if we carried out the syllabus in its entirety, fully half the pupils we examine would fail in the subject. Thus, few pupils indeed give us reading that is "rhetorical in the best sense, but not histrionic"; and fewer still show us "the use of turns of the voice that are conventional but perfectly natural, depending only upon an adequate conception of the writer's spirit and meaning." (The quotations are from the "Inspection of Schools and Standards of Examination.")

With regard to expressive reading, there is no doubt in our minds that many teachers fail to obtain it simply because, though they use good methods and set a fair model, they are quite unable to sustain the attention of their pupils, and so get them to do their utmost to reproduce the model set. At several schools, indeed, we have noticed a kind of antagonism between teacher and pupils at the reading-lesson.

But there is a worse fault than lack of expression in reading, and that is inarticulate mumbling, with poor enunciation. The contrast at different schools in this connection is really remarkable. At some the pupils stand up in manly fashion, with squared shoulders and heads thrown back, and speak up so as to be clearly heard over a large room; at other schools they stand on one foot, loll against the wall, sink their chins in their chests, and read in a shamefaced fashion, and in such a low tone that the examiner cannot hear them. Some teachers candidly told us that they could not get their pupils to speak out; but we have noticed that another teacher, on a change being made, found no difficulty with the same pupils. As we have often pointed out, low reading, like small writing, is merely a cloak to cover faults. Finally, we may say that lack of intelligence in oral work is nearly always associated with low, mumbling reading.

Dictation, with spelling, improves slowly. In Standard I. and Standard II. there is little to be desired in spelling, but the few errors made generally showed an ignorance of phonetic principles that we had previously found were well known by the same pupils when in the preparatory classes.

In Standard III. errors in the five dictated words were very frequent, and they were of such a nature as to show that the pupils could not divide the words into syllables—a sure example of "cram." In the passage dictated from Standard II. reading-book errors of the following kind were very common: "of" for "off," "were" for "where," and *vice versa*, "to" for "too," "main" for "mane," and such like. But errors of this sort point to very bad training.

In the higher classes the work was very varied. In many cases the passage was quite correctly written, but the majority of the words (five) were misspelled; while in others the passages showed marvellous carelessness (not reading sense), while all the words were correctly spelled. On the geography examination papers the spelling was often very bad. In any class there can be no excuse for beginning proper names with small letters.

In writing we seldom had to fail a pupil, and, taking the district as a whole, we believe writing is a strong subject, though by no means so strong as some years ago before drawing robbed it of an hour's teaching per week. Too many teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the manner in which the pen or pencil is held and to the position of the pupils. At some schools the writing on the transcription papers was far superior to the writing in copybooks; at others the reverse was the case. On the whole this district, we believe, is much above the average in writing. The examination papers generally were characterized by neatness and fine arrangement, and it would be very disappointing if such were not the case, considering the number of times we have written in examination reports examples of what is required. Occasionally we still come across a teacher who considers "life is too short" (words of a teacher) to spend time over inculcating habits of neatness and orderly arrangement; but such instances are rare, and the delinquent is generally a new arrival. No doubt the pupils of such a teacher will later on, if farmers, think "life is too short" to admit of a gorse hedge being kept in order; or, if artisans, they will be fine exponents of "the-good-enough-to-pass-inspection" theory.

Arithmetic was generally satisfactory in Standard I. and Standard II. as usual. In Standard III. we are of opinion that, considering the simplicity of the cards, the work might well have been better at more schools. In Standard IV. the results varied very much. At the best schools the pupils found no difficulty with the cards, while at others failure in the bill of parcels and in measure-tables and weight-tables was very common. Long measure, when knowledge of chains in a furlong, poles in a chain, and the like was required, brought many pupils to grief. Feilding School is deserving of special mention for the fine work in this standard. Of 45 pupils examined, 26 worked all the sums (five) correctly, 10 pupils were wrong in only one sum, and the remaining 9 pupils failed in only two sums. Also, the figuring and the general arrangement were very fine. There appears to us to be more than a fair year's work between the requirements in Standard III. and those in Standard IV. if the questions set in each standard were duly representative. In