

punctuation, or synthesis. In Standard IV. a letter was required upon one of several subjects chosen as in the higher standards, and an extra question was given, which was generally on the combination of sentences, or on putting certain words into sentences so as to show a knowledge of their correct usage. In Standard III. the requirements were a little composition exercise on one of several subjects, and a few sentences either in answer to direct questions or embodying given words as "where," "were," "to," "two," "too," and the like.

Now, with regard to the work received, all the remarks in our last report are again applicable. In Standard VI. and Standard V. with regard to essay- and letter-writing it was very marked what different views teachers took as to the kind of subjects upon which their pupils should have intelligent ideas that they could express well upon paper. Thus at some schools, notably College Street, Palmerston, leading international questions were written about, and many letters not only gave a considerable amount of correct information, but also showed an intelligent grasp of the subjects, and an orderly and logical arrangement of the facts. On the other hand, at many schools such subjects as "The Bush," "The Surrounding District," "A Trip up the Wanganui," were considered quite advanced enough for these standards.

In letter-writing in Standard IV., and frequently even in Standard V. and Standard VI., the usual complaint with regard to beginnings, endings, and addresses has to be made (see former reports), notwithstanding the manner in which the cards are printed with special features which pupils might be liable to forget shown in bold type.

In Standard III. the composition exercise was very fairly done at many schools, but little attention was paid to the note on the card, and we were generally pestered with inquiries regarding the second question. And here we may say that it was often a matter of great surprise to us that, though the questions are of the same nature year after year, though copious notes upon errors and bad methods found are sent with examination reports annually, and though the examination cards of each year are distributed (when finished with) amongst the schools, many pupils by their oral questions and by their methods of treating printed questions showed that they had no idea of the general lines of treatment required.

The class-subjects—grammar, history, geography (S. II.), science, object-lessons—were thoroughly examined at every school whether small or large. Before writing in detail on the various subjects, we may say that we think it a great mistake to require every one to be taken up at a small school with one teacher and several standards. Surely at such schools history, at all events, might be omitted.

Grammar continues to deteriorate above Standard III., and in several schools the work received by us plainly showed that incalculable harm is being done by the present loose method of treating grammar. This is much to be regretted, for grammar, if properly taught, is one of the most educative subjects in the primary school course. As Mr. Matthew Arnold points out, "grammar is an exact subject, every answer on which must be right or wrong, and no answer on which can have any value if it keeps to vague generalities. It compels a pupil, even more than arithmetic, to give the measure of his common-sense by his mode of selecting and applying, in particular instances, the rule when he knows it. . . . It is more effective than arithmetic as a logical training, because it operates with concretes or words, instead of with abstracts or figures." But as grammar, if well taught, is pre-eminently calculated to develop the intelligence of the pupils, so if treated in such a manner as merely to bring to light "lunatic mistakes" (Mr. Thring points out there is as much sense in parsing "children" singular as in calling a dog a calf) it must have just the opposite effect, for the more perfect the tool the worse results it obtains when in undisciplined hands. Grammar, we certainly think, should be placed amongst the "pass-subjects," and analysis should be begun in Standard IV.

History on the whole was a more or less unsatisfactory subject, but the number of schools at which it was intelligently taught in Standard III. has increased. The weakness in the subject is accounted for partly by poor, loose methods of treatment and partly by the unpunctuality of the pupils, history being the first subject on the time-table at the majority of schools. We hope in time to see the mere reading of an historical text-book substituted for class-teaching in history.

In Standard II. geography the work in general was satisfactory. It is most surprising to us that while pupils in this standard year after year show a fair knowledge of the relative positions of oceans and continents pupils in Standard IV. often display utter ignorance in the same connection when asked to describe ocean routes.

In science the favourite subject was agricultural chemistry. We believe better results would be obtained in it if less ground had to be covered. In object-lessons the treatment generally was disappointing. We are of opinion that most teachers look upon science and object-lessons merely as a means for imparting information, and quite ignore their educative value when properly treated.

Mental arithmetic has already been referred to.

The order and discipline, taking the schools as a whole, were excellent. Anything in the shape of bad behaviour was, as far as our experience went, almost unknown. The attention was not always what it might be. Teachers should remember that good attention does not consist in pupils merely sitting still and attempting answers when specially appealed to. When a question is put generally to a class every pupil should be on the alert to give an answer, and even after a fairly correct answer is given by one pupil there should be many others anxious to improve upon it. In oral work a kind of mental torpor, showing that the pupils were not following either the drift of their teacher's questions or the answers of their class-mates, was a prominent feature in many schools. Answering in low, shamefaced tones has still often to be condemned: how teachers can tolerate it for a moment we cannot understand.

We are sorry to have to state that we had to fail four pupils for deliberate copying from books. We take this opportunity of stating that in future no books, other than reading-books, are to be brought into the class-rooms on examination-day.