

class work. In both these standards the analysis was generally less faulty than the parsing. Class above Standard VI.: The sentence containing the words to be parsed was, "When I gave him the toast," continued the corporal, "I thought it proper to tell him that I was Captain Shandy's servant": "Proper," com. noun, &c.; "I," per. pronoun, third person; "gave," third per. sing., agrees with "I"; "thought," an adjective; "to tell," verb, indic. mood; "that," adjective qualifying "I"; "Captain," adjective qualifying "Shandy's"; "Shandy's," obj. case. In Standard VI., the same school, and the same sentence: "I," possessive case; "him," nominative to "toast"; "it," preposition governing "proper"; "it," preposition governing "thought." Standard V., "Six times the gossamery thread the wary spider threw": "Gossamery," noun (numerous cases); "threw," verb intransitive; "thread," a preposition; "wary," adverb; "wary," verb (several cases); "thread," an adjective; "wary," noun (several cases); "spider," adjective; "thread," a pronoun; "times," a verb; "thread," nominative to "wary"; "threw," verb, &c., objective, gov. by "threw"; "thread," nominative to "gossamery." In the Fourth Standard the simple parsing required by the Syllabus was on the whole fairly well done, but few attempts were successfully made to answer the questions bearing upon the inflections of the noun, pronoun, and adjective.

Mental arithmetic and comprehension both show some improvement this year. Recitation is improving in the lower, but is not so satisfactory in the upper standards. The best recitation in the lower standards this year was met with in one of the small aided schools. Military drill is practised at eight schools, and the ordinary class drill is attended to in most. As nearly all the smaller schools are under the management of female teachers, it is hardly fair to expect more than this. With regard to the class and additional subjects, I am quite in accord with the recommendation made by the Teachers' Institute, and which I have suggested more than once in former reports, that teachers should be allowed to select, say, two subjects from each group, instead of being expected to undertake the whole.

General Remarks.—Although the tabulated statement of the results does not disclose a very high "percentage of passes," I am quite satisfied that the state of primary education in this district is on the whole efficient and satisfactory; the teachers are painstaking and earnest in their work; and the order and discipline inside the schools, together with the manners and behaviour of the scholars outside (so far as they fall under my observation), give evidence of careful training that cannot fail to be productive of permanent benefit to the community. Perhaps the most pleasing feature in the educational prospects of the district is the excellent results obtained by the young teachers who have been placed in charge of schools during the last few years.

The inspection and examination of the small and widely-scattered aided schools in the Sounds County is a matter of no small difficulty, and it is greatly to be desired that a better system could be adopted, especially for the examination. Hitherto the practice has been for several schools to meet at certain centres, on a day fixed some months beforehand, and the parents have also to provide for the passage of the Inspector to the next centre. The elements, however, often interfere with these arrangements, and (as was the case this year) several schools may be prevented by the weather from reaching the appointed place. Under the most favourable circumstances, this puts the parents and children to much inconvenience, and not a little danger. Even when not prevented from attending, the weather, which is very unreliable at that time of year, often changes, and the return of open boats full of children with their teachers and parents is then a matter of much difficulty and risk. Similarly, if the Inspector is from the same cause prevented from reaching a centre of examination on the appointed day, the whole of the pre-arranged tour is thrown out of gear, and much inconvenience and delay are the consequence. There is only one way of obviating this difficulty, and that is the chartering of one of the small steamboats that ply in the Sounds to carry the Inspector from one centre to the next, calling on the way to pick up the children to be examined, taking them to the appointed place, and returning them in the evening to their respective homes. It would be easy to make some such arrangement, but of course it would mean an additional expense in connection with these schools, an expense, however, which I think would be warranted by the greater regularity and certainty of the inspection and examination visits. The average attendance at the twenty-six schools in the Sounds at the present time is 148, and the Board receives on account of these schools £555 annually, whilst the capitation paid by the Board for the same amounts to £718 per annum, or £153 in excess of receipts, so it seems hardly likely that the Board can afford to incur any much greater expense on their account. This is a matter, however, which I think might fairly be represented to the department as an additional reason for a more liberal treatment of this and other small education districts.

Blenheim Schools.—In my first report to your Board (for the year 1891) I expressed an opinion that it would be very much to the advantage of both boys and girls at those schools if they were taught together instead of separately, as now. I pointed out that in nearly all the large schools in the other education districts, with the exception of Nelson, the sexes are taught together, and referred to some of the advantages of the mixed system. At that time the suggestion that the schools should be reunited was by no means favourably received. The objections urged against its adoption, if of any validity in Blenheim, should be equally applicable to the organization of all the larger mixed schools in New Zealand, as well as of the country schools in this district; but no such objection is heard of in these places. Under proper regulations the intercourse between boys and girls would really be far less in a mixed school than it is at present under the separate system. Boys and girls are allowed to attend churches, concerts, picnics, &c., together, where there is far less vigilant supervision than there is at a well managed school, without any outcry being raised against the practice, and during an experience of twenty years I have never heard of a case of impropriety at any large mixed schools. I do not expect that anything I can say will remove the groundless apprehensions or unreasonable prejudices which have hitherto stood in the way of this most desirable alteration; but a glance at the tables of this report will show that there is a considerable difference in the results of the examinations of these two schools, greatly to the disadvantage of the girls, and I am convinced that this difference will exist, in a greater or less degree, so long as the present arrangement is allowed to continue.