

most accurate. It is in the matter of slowness of working that some reproach attaches to the classes in arithmetic in the higher standards of the large schools. All the year there is too much "marking time" on their own ground by the better pupils; the pace of the laggards becomes the pace of the class. Of course this is a real danger in every subject where pupils are taught in very large classes, but in arithmetic the remedy, as I have often pointed out to head-teachers, is not difficult of application. Let the good pupils go ahead without losing their time listening to the frequently recurring explanations that are necessary before the dull ones can be made to grasp some principle and put it into practice.

Both in the teaching of composition and in the quality of work presented by the pupils improvement is made from year to year. So far as simple passing is concerned, Standards III., V., and VI. come close together with a very creditable return, while Standard IV. lags considerably behind. I am not always satisfied that the scholars have received sufficient instruction as to the proper forms to be observed at the beginning and at the end of the letters they write, and as to the mode of addressing envelopes. A little more care in this direction would greatly add to the school-value of the exercises in letter-writing; and the utility of the instruction for the affairs of every-day life demands that it should not in any case suffer from neglect. In Standards V. and VI. great weakness is shown in the correction of sentences that are glaringly faulty in grammar or in construction, and in the punctuation of sentences involving the right use of inverted commas.

Geography still keeps its place as a pass-subject in spite of valid reasons put forth from time to time for its displacement and for its inclusion in the group of class-subjects. I prefer to examine the subject orally, because under oral examination one covers much ground in a short space of time, and quickly and fairly decides whether the subject has been taught with intelligence and fullness, and whether the class as a whole is well prepared; and surely this is enough for an examiner to find out in a subject like geography. Except in very small classes I require to supplement the oral examination by a certain amount of answering on slates, being compelled to do so by the necessity of marking "Pass" or "Fail" against the name of every pupil. This makes the work of examining a large class a laborious process, and one that is irksome in an extreme degree, because it is carried out under strong conviction that this marking of passes and failures in geography, though necessary under the existing regulations, is not only useless, but positively harmful. It is pandering to "cram," which fosters in the children a distaste for a subject that should be one of the most delightful and instructive of all their lessons. In this subject, as in others, it is true that every well-taught class gains a high percentage of passes; it is also true that a high percentage is sometimes gained without our being able to compliment the teacher on the quality of his teaching. But, putting aside the cases where the acquisition of a sufficient amount of geography to pass the standard is the goal aimed at, I am pleased to say that most of our teachers give evidence of skill, diligence, and resource in their treatment of the geography lessons. The stirring events of the year brought into prominence places in the Far East, in India, in Africa, and in the West; and there are not many pupils of the highest classes that have not had their attention directed to the scheming of the European Powers in Northern China, to the brilliant sea-fights of their American cousins at Manila and Santiago, to the heroic episode of Dargai, and to Kitchener's splendid victory at Omdurman; while Fashoda would be "spotted" on the map as readily as Waterloo.

The class-subjects—grammar, history, geography (Standard II.), science, object-lessons, mental arithmetic—were examined in every school, and a brief statement of their quality was given in every report. In one of the columns of the appendix will be found against the name of every school a word that roughly indicates the proficiency in the class-subjects as a whole, and in the next column the same thing is done for the additional subjects, the latter including recitation, drill, singing, sewing, and comprehension of the language of the reading-lessons. In class-subjects six schools are marked "good," thirty-two "satisfactory," twenty-one "fair," and six "moderate." In additional subjects eleven schools are marked "good," thirty-eight "satisfactory," fourteen "fair," and two "moderate." In this report I do not intend to take up these subjects in detail, but I cannot let this opportunity pass without expressing my appreciation of the marked improvement that is being made in the giving of object-lessons.

Although we have no special institution for the training of our pupil-teachers, their success in the department's annual examinations for certificates has for years been of the most satisfactory kind, and creditable in the highest degree to themselves and the head-teachers who have trained them; indeed, their success compares most favourably with that of the candidates from any other education district. That some of our young teachers are not content to make the attainment of an E or a D certificate their final goal is proved by the fact that, of those that have served their pupil-teachership during my own term of office, two have won the M.A. degree with first- and second-class honours respectively, four have gained the B.A. degree, and many are now studying with a view to graduation.

In only a small minority of our schools have I found it necessary to award a mark lower than "good" for discipline, tone, and manners. Conspicuously displayed in every schoolroom is the "Good Manners" chart, which "sets forth in short, terse sentences what courteous boys and girls should be careful to observe respecting their conduct at home, at school, at play, in the street, at table, and everywhere." The chart was issued by the Board not simply as a wall-adornment, but for use; and I have had frequent testimony of its value from teachers who deem it the highest privilege of their office to mould the characters of the boys and girls intrusted to their charge.

I have, &c.,

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, South Canterbury Board of Education.