

CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION.—The annual synchronous examination of Standard VI pupils for certificates of proficiency took place on the 15th December, the candidates being examined at convenient centres under the supervision of teachers appointed by the Board. The following table shows the certificates awarded as the result of the examination :—

Board.		Catholic.		High School.		Private.		Totals.	
Pro-ficiency.	Com-petency.	Pro-ficiency.	Com-petency.	Pro-ficiency.	Com-petency.	Pro-ficiency.	Com-petency.	Pro-ficiency.	Com-petency.
386	114	45	15	7	10	..	..	438	139

With reference to the various subjects of instruction, I beg to report as follows:—

ENGLISH.—The teaching of English, on the whole, shows improvement, and the general results are very gratifying. Reading is rendered with intelligence and fluency, and the pupils display commendable comprehension of the reading-matter. The reading, however, is in many schools marred by careless and slipshod enunciation, and by a perversion of vowel functions most unpleasing to the ear. Recitation is somewhat disappointing, the defect in quality being largely due to the selection of unsuitable pieces by the teacher, and to the faults referred to in reading being allowed to pass unchecked. Composition is much improved. The pupils display greater freedom of expression, a wider range of thought, and a larger vocabulary than ever previously. This gratifying result is due to a variety of causes. The *School Journal*, with its interesting monthly budget of current world-history, is not only read with interest, but it also stimulates further independent reading of a similar character. The school library is now an established institution, and the school which cannot provide suitable and ample home reading-matter is now the exception rather than the rule. And, lastly, the system of oral training in the lower classes and the development of the power of expression by language and observation lessons is now bearing fruit in the upper standards. Writing is generally satisfactory. The style usually adopted in this district is that of Vere Foster's "Medium" copy-book. The same style is carried out in all written work, and the result is a neat, clear, legible hand in the majority of the schools. Spelling is good, but somewhat narrow—that is, the pupils will write a passage from dictation from their own prepared reading-book correctly enough, but will make a poor attempt at an easier unseen passage. The present practice, however, of frequently giving "unseen" tests to the Fifth and Sixth Standards will soon correct this weakness.

ARITHMETIC.—This subject is carefully tested at the annual visit, both orally and by written tests, and due regard is paid to the methods of working and the style of expressing the solution of the problem. The results are generally satisfactory, and I am satisfied that the subject is taught intelligently, and with due regard to comprehension of principles involved and expression.

GEOGRAPHY.—This is, without doubt, the least satisfactory of the subjects taught in our schools. The reason is not far to seek. Insufficient use is made of the maps and the globe. The pupils can reproduce the contents of the text-book, but examined at the map they appear utterly lost. There is no excuse whatever for this style of teaching. Every school in the district is abundantly supplied with maps and globes, so that parrot-like repetition of non-assimilated matter receives the scantiest consideration. In the annual examination for certificates of proficiency this subject showed the poorest results of the entire syllabus.

DRAWING.—This subject continues to be well taught generally. There is, however, a tendency to overlook the requirements of Standard VI as indicated in the syllabus.

HISTORY AND CIVIC INSTRUCTION.—The teaching of history can hardly be considered satisfactory. In schools where a Historical Reader is used, and supplemented by oral instruction and composition, the best results are obtained; but these schools are not common. Civic instruction is given intelligently, the interesting nature of the matter rendering the subject popular with both teachers and pupils.

SINGING.—This subject is greatly neglected, and what ought to be the most enjoyable hour of the week is practically wasted. In the great majority of schools no attempt is made to produce a sweet natural tone. Voices are forced and strained, and possibly permanently injured. Songs are selected which are utterly unsuitable in range and character. In the few schools where singing is taught by competent teachers using correct methods it is a pleasure to listen to the singing, a pleasure which the singers share with the listener. The Napier Musical Competitions Society has taken great interest in school singing, and has made praiseworthy efforts to foster the correct teaching of singing in schools, but the benefit has not been so widely extended as it might have been.

HANDWORK.—The various branches of handwork still continue to receive a satisfactory amount of attention. Brush drawing, modelling, and paper-folding are taught in seventy-six schools; needlework (under Regulation 26 (e)), in fifteen schools; physical measurements, in four schools; elementary chemistry, in four schools; elementary agriculture, in fifty-eight schools; elementary agriculture and dairy work, in fourteen schools; dairy work, in two schools; woodwork, in eight schools (held at four centres); dressmaking, in nine schools (held at five centres); cookery, in nine schools (held at five centres). Teachers' classes for the following subjects are held at five centres: Drawing, cookery, agriculture, chemistry, dressmaking, physiology, and first aid.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURE-STUDY.—A special report dealing fully with these subjects has been made by Mr. E. Lotten, Instructor in Agriculture, and is appended hereto. [Not reprinted.]