

master in presenting his classes at Christmas, 1877, in a standard higher than he was obliged to do; but that the progress made by the pupils at Greymouth during the last three years has been sound and satisfactory. No doubt the foundation of this success was laid in the judicious classification of the children on the first establishment of the school. To say this now is a simple act of justice, but to have said it after the June examination, having in memory the comparative weakness of two important classes at the previous June examination, would have been jumping to a conclusion from very insufficient premises. And I have no doubt that my remarks on the two occasions referred to, though very unpalatable to those concerned at the time, have not been without some influence in bringing about so satisfactory a conclusion.

I have frequently had to complain of the great number of scholars absent on the day of examination, and I am glad to be able on the present occasion to report a very great improvement in this respect, fewer children having been absent this year than at any previous examination. This is a very gratifying fact, and shows that parents are beginning to understand the system of standards, and to see the importance of sending their children to be examined, and consequently classified for the ensuing year. And it is, perhaps, to be regretted that a new system of standards must now be adopted—a system which, however well suited to the conditions of larger and more populous districts, is evidently too ambitious for the majority of our schools.

On the whole, I am satisfied with the progress made during the year, and with the efficiency of the schools generally. Making all due allowances for the various drawbacks which have been alluded to, there are only six schools where the results can be described as bad. In the table of results I have added a column in each class above the second to show how many pupils passed with credit—that is, gained more than 75 per cent. of the possible marks. Column 11 shows the percentage of those examined who passed, and column 12 the percentage of passes in all classes above infants. In column 11, anything above 90 may be considered an excellent result; 80 to 90, very good; 70 to 80, good; 60 to 70, poor; and below 60, bad. Column 12 shows the percentage as in Victoria, except that there the infants are included. It is a very fallacious method of estimating the efficiency of a school, as a glance at the table of results will show. In the case of school No. 8, the percentage of passes is very good (80), although only 32 per cent. of those examined passed. Again, school No. 13 makes 83 per cent. of passes, but only 42 per cent. of the children examined passed. If the infants were included the discrepancy would be still greater. And yet upon this system of passes it was seriously proposed to base the bonus payments! In Victoria, where a third of the teachers' salaries depends upon their results, the case is very different, but even there it must be a very poor criterion of the *relative* merits of schools.

NEW STANDARDS.—I do not think it will be possible to adopt the new programme in its entirety at any of our schools during the present year; nor is it, in my opinion, advisable to attempt to introduce the subjects mentioned in Regulations 11 and 12 into any of the smaller schools. The powers of the teachers of such schools are already taxed to the uttermost to maintain them in an average state of efficiency, nor is it probable that many of them would be able at present to undertake the teaching of such subjects; and this is evidently anticipated in No. 15 of the "Regulations for the Examination and Classification of Teachers," which allows teachers two years to prepare for examination in elementary science. If the introduction of the subjects referred to be insisted on, it is to be feared that, in the absence of some provision for a small extra payment for teaching such subjects as music, drawing, &c., many of the teachers, especially those who have migrated from Victoria, will seek employment where they will be able to obtain equal or larger salaries for teaching the ordinary subjects of an elementary school course, and where extra subjects are paid for, and taught outside the ordinary school hours.

A supply of the text-books recommended by the Minister has been ordered, but will not arrive in time to enable any teachers, who may be disposed to do so, to comply with the instructions contained in clause 12 of the "Regulations," which provides that "the head teacher of each school shall prepare a syllabus showing the distribution of these subjects over a three years' course." I must, however, admit that I cannot see how, after teaching reading, writing, spelling, grammar, arithmetic, geography, history, English composition, mental arithmetic, and (in the case of girls) needlework, any time can be spared out of the twenty or twenty-five hours a week appointed by the Act (sec. 84) for teaching music, drawing, or science, however elementary. But as clause 9 of the regulations allows scholars to pass the standards without being instructed in these extra subjects, I imagine that Boards have the power to adopt or reject the remainder of the syllabus as they may think fit, and, if I am correct in drawing this conclusion, I strongly advise the Board to insist, for the present, upon the subjects of the standards as set forth in Regulations 7, 9 (omitting singing and drawing), and 10, and to leave the adoption of the remainder of the programme to the discretion of the teachers, or to some future date. The prudence of this course will, I think, be apparent, if we compare the new programme with that which it has superseded. It will be seen that not only is each standard in the new programme nearly equal to the next higher in the old, but the treatment of the subjects themselves is expected to be far more comprehensive. To verify the foregoing statement, it is only necessary to compare Standards IV., V., and VI. of the new, with Standards V., VI., and VII. of the old programme. It must not, however, be supposed that the adoption of the above suggestion will have the effect of altogether banishing elementary science from our schools. The admirable reading-books supplied by the Board abound in most valuable lessons on scientific subjects, and of these I propose to make use at the next annual examination.

NEEDLEWORK.—Needlework, which is taught at all our schools having one or more female assistants, is not looked upon with favour by a few teachers, who regard the time so spent as, if not wasted, at least filched from subjects which they consider more important, and by which the passing or failing of a pupil is estimated. Under the new regulations, however, all girls who are systematically and efficiently instructed in this branch will be allowed a reduction of 10 per cent. of the marks necessary to pass the standards. This concession should go far to remove the disfavour with which this subject has been, in some cases, regarded. Great complaints are made by the teachers of girls absenting themselves, by the desire of their parents, on those afternoons when sewing is taught. I have, in several instances, suggested a remedy for this evil.