

| | 1886. | 1887. | 1888. |
|---|-------|-------|-------|
| Percentage on class subjects— | | | |
| Drawing | 48·9 | 64·0 | 68·9 |
| History | 49·9 | 35·0 | 37·2 |
| Geography | 54·0 | 42·0 | 50·8 |
| Elementary science and object lessons | 55·6 | 53·0 | 62·0 |
| Mean percentage on class subjects | 52·1 | 48·5 | 54·7 |
| Average of marks for additional subjects (possible total, 20 for 1886, 25 for 1887, 40 for 1888)— | | | |
| Repetition and recitation | 13·5 | 15·0 | 16·0 |
| Drill and exercises | 15·0 | 16·0 | 12·5 |
| Singing | 17·5 | 18·0 | 22·0 |
| Needlework | 16·5 | 17·8 | 22·5 |
| Subject matter | 15·0 | 12·0 | ... |
| Mean average | 14·8 | 15·8 | ... |

I am glad to be able to record a considerable improvement in the condition of Classes P. I. and P. II. I have always expressed to the teachers my approval of what may, in contradistinction to the forcing process, be called the retarding process for these classes; and results testify to the correctness of the opinion. In some schools Class P. II. took the principal part of the work of Standard I., and acquitted itself most creditably. By sending the scholars into Standard I. well prepared for the work of that class, greater security is furnished for effective progress in the subsequent standards, and a safeguard also is provided against a child being tortured through the upper standards while in too immature a condition of mental development. Where results have been weak in these classes the matter has generally been beyond the teacher's control. Take, for instance, the Taylorville School as a case in point. Here we have nearly a hundred young children in a room very much overcrowded, and under the charge of a lower-class pupil-teacher. No conditions can be imagined likely to be more productive of not only unsatisfactory but also injurious and mischievous consequences, or to tell with more fatal effect upon the work of the standards. No infant class of such size should be trusted to any but a thoroughly-qualified female assistant. Dobson and Greymouth Schools have also suffered during the past year from the overcrowding of the lower divisions, but less than the Taylorville School from lack of teaching power. In both the latter schools excellent work has been done in spite of their drawbacks. In the Greymouth School the headmistress needs the help of an assistant, her staff being composed exclusively of pupil-teachers.

I would strongly recommend the Board to adopt the following plan, by which both the Greymouth and the country schools would be benefited: That female teachers having charge of the lower divisions in the larger country schools and those having sole charge of small schools be allowed to spend three months in the Greymouth School. By this means these teachers would acquire a knowledge of the best methods, thereby benefiting their own schools, and the Greymouth School would secure the services of another teacher. For this purpose the appointment of an extra assistant teacher would be necessary, who would be unattached to the staff of any particular school, but would temporarily occupy the position of the teacher going through the course of training. By this means also Miss Weaver's capabilities as a kindergarten teacher could be made of service to our country schools. A person who had never heard of the kindergarten system of teaching would, after seeing the work performed by very juvenile fingers at the Greymouth School, recognise the patent influence of such a mode of training, not only in its bearing upon ordinary school work, but as a means of promoting patience, industry, skill, ingenuity, and cleanliness. That teachers having charge of small schools produce good results in their infant classes without neglect of their higher classes is proof of their industry and skill, and, comparing the general work of the smaller schools with that of the larger, the former suffer nothing by the contrast.

READING.—In very few cases is an adherence to the exploded "alphabetic method" of teaching reading to be found, it being generally superseded by the "look and say" method. The latter system is, however, in the majority of cases but imperfectly used, sufficient importance not being given to a thorough classification of words, or to the value of exercises in word making by the scholars. In the upper classes there is decided improvement perceptible in the style and manner of the reading, but the necessity for reform still exists. Of fluency and audibility there is little to complain. I was unable to thoroughly test the "knowledge of the subject matter" as I should like to have done; but evidence was forthcoming of much deficiency in this respect. Questions put with the intention of testing the knowledge of the pupil as to the meanings of the words met with in the reading lesson too often were responded to with entire silence or ludicrous plunging. This is no doubt attributable partly to imperfect and perfunctory methods of teaching, but quite as much to the character of the books used. The Royal Readers are doubtless good books, and full of very useful information, but for the ordinary primary scholar they are not by any means as interesting as they might be, and in many chapters their flight is altogether too high. Wrong emphasis upon syllables and upon words in sentences are two common defects, arising, however, from totally different causes. The first is usually a habit contracted in the early stages, and may be corrected and overcome by careful and diligent drill. The latter is intimately connected with that want of knowledge of the subject matter to which I have already referred. Pattern reading by the teacher