

previous years are also given. To pass in any subject it is necessary for the scholars to obtain at least half the maximum number of marks assigned to it. From this table there would appear to be a decline of 3 per cent. in drawing, 5 per cent. in arithmetic and writing, and 10 per cent. in spelling. While grammar has improved 10 per cent., and geography 5 per cent., on last year's results, writing remains the same. A fluctuation of 5 per cent. on these percentages is not a matter calling for any remark or explanation, teaching, like every other occupation, being liable to periods of prosperity and depression. Spelling is the only subject that seems to call for special remark, as the percentages show an apparent decline during the last two years of 18 per cent. This is mainly due not to any real difference in the quality of the work done, but to the greater severity of the examination in this subject which I found it necessary to introduce, partly on account of its intrinsic importance and of the weakness too frequently observable in the spelling of the other written papers of the examination, and partly as an additional check upon the premature promotion of scholars who, while weak in several subjects, often manage to escape failure, though really quite unfit for promotion. Such scholars would no doubt be left in their old classes if the teachers were allowed the use of their own discretion. I am quite sure that no scholar who failed through the severity of the spelling test was really fit for promotion to a higher class. The weakness or, possibly, the carelessness of the candidates for the scholarship in the matter of spelling has been remarked on by the examiner more than once, and is more or less noticeable in all the written work of the examination, but particularly in Standards III. and IV., in which mistakes in the spelling of the simplest and easiest words are abundant. Leaving out the seven smaller schools, where as a rule only the lower standards are at present represented, Table 5 shows the percentage of passes gained in each school in all the pass subjects.

Tables 6 and 7 give particulars of the marks for class and additional subjects gained at each school, and require no explanation. Table 8 gives information respecting the work of the class above Standard VI.

I will now make a few remarks upon the treatment of the principal items of the syllabus in this district.

READING is on the whole the most satisfactory subject of the programme. There are, however, a few cases in which little attention appears to have been paid to it, and where pattern reading—the only way in which reading can be taught—is but an occasional occurrence. The fault, much complained of by writers on school method, of teaching discursively several subjects along with reading, has no place in our schools. Perhaps the error is rather in the opposite direction, for the questions asked to test the children's comprehension of the subject of their reading lessons were but poorly answered. In the First Standard the reading book is gone through so often during the year that some of the children read (?) as well with the book shut as open. This will be remedied by the resolution recently passed by the Board requiring Standard I. to read out of both the First Reader and the Sequel.

WRITING gives a higher percentage of passes than reading, yet it is not, in my opinion, quite so satisfactory, in consequence of its limited practical application. I mean that, while the passage for transcription, by which the marks are awarded, is generally very well written, the other papers are sometimes positively disgraceful as specimens of handwriting. The orthodox method of holding pens, and the proper sitting position during the writing lesson, are seldom attended to with strictness, and, although very good writing is occasionally produced by scholars holding their pens in every conceivable manner, there is no doubt that better general results would repay attention to this particular.

ARITHMETIC, as usual, stands last with regard to the percentage of passes, and is on the whole the most disappointing item of the examination. And yet this cannot generally arise from defective methods of teaching, as all the scholars of any one class necessarily receive the same kind and amount of instruction, and in every class in the generality of schools there are some very well-executed papers in the subject. The disappointment experienced in this case must, I think, be attributed to one or both of two faults in the scholars which are partially traceable to the teachers. The first of these is carelessness in the work itself, and slovenly writing and figuring, to which numberless mistakes can easily be traced; and the other I imagine must be a habit of copying carried on during the year, thus concealing from the teacher a weakness which might otherwise have been discovered and rectified. I fear, also, from what I occasionally notice during my inspection visits, that the teacher does not make a practice of satisfying himself that the work overlooked by other scholars has been correctly marked. The bill given in Standard IV. was more successfully dealt with on some former occasions. Mental arithmetic is not so much utilised as it might be in the ordinary school work. I very rarely saw at my inspections any practical application of mental to ordinary arithmetic. A few scholars in each standard received nearly full marks for this subject at several schools, but the majority were decidedly weak.

GRAMMAR exhibits some improvement, but the explanation of passages from their reading books given by scholars in Standard V. and Standard VI. was as a rule very poor. The introduction of this matter in the grammar paper was a novelty in this district, though I believe it has frequently been given in other parts of the colony. The fact is, as observed before, the Fifth and Sixth Royal Readers contain too much matter of interest and importance to be mastered in a single year each, though not too much to afford the necessary amount of practice in reading. I shall therefore next year take all matter for the examination, excepting the actual reading; out of the first half of each book. The composition of the upper classes was very good, what there was of it, but there was sometimes so little as hardly to afford a fair criterion as to the capability of the scholar for this branch of the subject. The attempts by the scholars in Standard VI. to give the derivations of words taken by themselves from a given paragraph in their reading books were not in many cases successful, and some were mere random guesses.

GEOGRAPHY.—The questions in this subject were frequently answered incompletely. If asked to give the names and positions of a few towns, mountains, &c., the names only would be given;