

*Arithmetic.*—The percentage of passes usually gained in this subject seldom appears commensurate with the amount of time and trouble generally expended on it. The very poor work done at some schools necessarily reduces the general average, but good results are obtained at many, and excellent work is shown at some. Several of the small aided schools also did remarkably well. There is much room for improvement in the direction of neatness and methodical setting out of the work, and numerous errors can be traced to hurried scribbling, with, as a consequence, badly formed figures, and in certain examples to the omission of a written explanation at each stage of the work. Where these points are attended to the result is nearly always satisfactory.

*Composition* shows satisfactory improvement in all standards but the third. Excepting a few of the largest schools and several aided schools, the children in the Third Standard appear to be ignorant of the nature of a simple sentence. The whole "composition" will be written without a stop of any kind until the end, the different statements being generally connected with the same expression throughout—"and so," "and then," &c. In all cases the subject proposed for composition was a short anecdote, taken from a book not likely to be known to any of the scholars, and read out or repeated twice.

*Geography* still remains the least satisfactory of the subjects taught in our schools. With a few brilliant exceptions (and those not all at large schools), the knowledge of the trade routes required in Standard IV. is very meagre, while the "rotation" and the "revolution" of the earth are frequently confounded, as also are "watershed" and "river basin," and sometimes "parallels" and "meridians" in the higher standards. Map drawing generally is far from good, and often the country supposed to be represented is quite unrecognisable from its shape. The use of the geographical readers, which are lying almost unasked-for on the shelves of the Board's office, would largely increase the children's interest in the subject, and would undoubtedly lead to a marked improvement in the results.

*History.*—Now that teachers are permitted to select for themselves a limited number of "persons and events" from a given period of English history, it necessarily follows that more numerous answers are given to the questions put by the examiner, but I doubt whether the change has been beneficial from a purely educational point of view, chiefly because the object of the alteration has been misunderstood by some teachers, who appear to be satisfied with giving the few words of the text book referring to the selected events to be committed to memory, while little real comprehension of the subject is apparent. With regard especially to the dates selected, very little, and sometimes nothing, beyond the bare names of the events connected with them can be given, and I often find by continued questioning that nothing else is known. It has been continually suggested that this subject should form the substance of a second reading-book, for which there is so much need in our schools. There are many historical readers that are admirable in their way, for instance, Arnold Foster's "Stories from English History," but I fear the expense will be a bar to the general introduction of such a book in our schools. I am rather surprised that so few teachers of small schools have taken advantage of the permission to combine classes for instruction in history and geography. Indeed, under clause 4 of the regulations this can be done with regard to any subject, and I am sure a wider recognition and practical application of this "freedom of classification" would often afford great relief to the sole teachers of schools having all the standard classes represented. At present only two of our schools have made use of this liberty.

The removal of grammar and analysis from the "pass" to the "class" group appears this year to have had the effect of lowering the efficiency of the instruction. This does not necessarily imply that the subject has been neglected by the teachers. The same result might arise from the scholars' knowledge that it is no longer necessary for a "pass." Theoretically the transference of any subject from the pass to the class group should not affect the thoroughness with which it is treated, but practically there is in almost all cases a marked difference in the results. It has been so in my experience with geography in Standard IV., and judging by this year's work it seems likely to be the case with grammar also. In the treatment of this subject some common faults in the parsing of the higher standards are the omission of important particulars altogether, or giving them in every possible order except the proper one; the use of ambiguous abbreviations, e.g., "ad." for "adverb" or "adjective." Others again use initial letters only (the letter "p" may stand for a great variety of words), as "him, pp, 3, s, m, o." "In." is used as an abbreviation for "infinitive," "indefinite," "indicative," "intransitive," &c. It would be a great advantage to the examiner if some uniform order of arrangement of the grammatical facts required in parsing were adopted by all teachers—say, the form given in Morris's grammar, page 120. This will save much trouble and annoyance, whether the examination be oral or written.

Vocal music does not at present receive much attention. At most schools it is entirely unknown, and at a few only of the larger ones it is taught, chiefly by ear. Several of our teachers have intimated their intention of adopting the tonic sol-fa method, and I have already supplied some modulators and song-books. I am sure there are few teachers who could not soon make themselves sufficiently acquainted with this system to be able to introduce singing into their schools with a fair prospect of success.

Military drill is admirably taught at Blenheim Boys' School, Tua Marina, Grovetown, and Renwick, and sufficient class drill at all the Board's schools to enable the necessary movements to be made with order and regularity.

On the whole, the work of the year has proved to be far more satisfactory than I was led to expect at the commencement of the examination. The reports that came from all parts of the colony with regard to the prevalence of measles were loudly re-echoed in this district. The very unusual amount of wet weather, with the frequent accompaniment, in Blenheim, of a flood which submerged the greater part of the streets, and compelled the closing of the school for two or three days, increased in no small degree the difficulties of the teachers; and the most gloomy forebodings of disaster at the coming examinations were freely expressed. That these have not been realised is