

to those in the Sixth Standard. Failures were not unfrequent in the working of the questions demanding thoughtful intelligence; but the boys in the senior division of the Wanganui District High School took a firm grip of these, and solved them admirably. The papers handed in by them were models of neatness, arrangement, and accuracy of work. I may here impress upon teachers the necessity of the more systematic teaching of the principles of arithmetic. Generally speaking, arithmetic appears to be taught too much by mere rule. There is far too little inculcation of principle. But, taking into consideration that children, from nervousness and flurry, appear to lose their wits at the Inspector's examination, I am happy to be able to report that, on the whole, satisfactory progress has been made in arithmetical knowledge since last examination, although under different standards.

MENTAL ARITHMETIC.—I have to report that this important subject is, with one or two honorable exceptions, at the lowest ebb in the schools. Its power as a mental cultivator is not understood and not appreciated. Next year I hope to find it in its proper place in the curriculum. To the following questions I rarely got a correct answer: What sum will be required to pay the wages of ten men for one week at 2s. 4d. a day? Required the rent of a garden containing eight acres, at £7 16s. 6d. per acre? What is the cost of a yard of cloth when £4 15s. is paid for 5 yards? These questions were proposed to children in the upper standards. I consider the plan of giving simple questions involving some little thought about the way to solve them an excellent one. I mean to adopt it, but not exclusively, in future examinations. Other questions will be given with the view of bringing out whether the scholars have learned the simple rules of mental calculation, and can apply them quickly and readily. Good marks will be given for proficiency in mental calculation.

GRAMMAR.—The elementary grammar prescribed to the children of the Third and Fourth Standards was not well got up, only a half or so of the scholars presented acquitting themselves creditably. And this was only accomplished under a lenient and patient examination, which may not be repeated. Acquaintance with the inflections was meagre at the best, and the pronoun seemed to be a part of speech with which they were altogether unacquainted. The boys of the Senior Division of the Wanganui District High School, however, should be mentioned by way of exception to this. The grammar exercises prescribed to the children of the Fifth and Sixth Standards, generally, indicated that the subject was pretty well understood. However, there is room for improvement in parsing and in the analysis of sentences.

COMPOSITION.—This is the least satisfactory portion of the essential work of the upper standards. The letter which the children of the Fourth Standard were required to write contained only morsels of the information they should have had on the subject prescribed, which was usually a popular one. There were, indeed, honorable exceptions. The style which a letter ought to take was generally well known and reproduced. More attention to the use of capitals, punctuation, and the framing of a simple sentence, will be expected and appreciated at next examination. A selected portion of verse was submitted to the presentees of the Fifth and Sixth Standards, and they were required to give the substance of it in their own words. The result showed in most cases that the exercise was a novel one to them, and that no little difficulty was felt in rendering the passage submitted in equivalent words of their own choosing.

GEOGRAPHY.—Notwithstanding the ample appliances with which the schools are furnished, I have to report somewhat unfavourably as to knowledge of geography. Speaking of the teaching of this subject in the Second and Third Standards, I may say that, whilst in one or two schools I found nothing to complain of, yet in most I saw evidence that the teaching had been of a too careless sort. The papers set for the upper standards contained three sections, but the pupils were allowed to answer questions from one section only. These sections fairly covered the field prescribed for each of the standards. Some excellent papers were handed in, but the majority did not indicate an intelligent grasp of the subject. It appeared to me, when revising the papers, that there was a tendency in the teaching to turn the attention of the children to parts of the subject not likely to be of much practical benefit to them. Map-drawing is a very effectual means of fixing details in the memory of the children, and I would recommend more frequent practice of it, if better results are to be got. A globe, in addition to present appliances, would be helpful.

HISTORY.—I have to report more favourably of the result of my examination in history than of that in geography. However, I was by no means favourably impressed with the appearance made by the children in the Third Standard. Considerable difference of opinion was frequently expressed by the teachers as to the extent of the field to be cultivated. Few schools attempted more than the chronological order of the periods, or a few unimportant events in the Norman or the Brunswick period. In the upper standards fair knowledge of the subject was occasionally displayed. As in geography, the papers set contained three sections, the pupils being allowed to answer questions from one section only. The papers worked not unfrequently gave indications of rote and cramming. At the same time some really good papers were given in. In several of the schools in which geography and history have been interestingly taught, I am pleased to be able to say that there has been a marked improvement in the knowledge of both geography and history, but especially of history.

SEWING.—I am happy to report that praiseworthy improvement, during the year, has been made in the girls' industrial education. Sewing is now taught generally and systematically. Almost every girl has a piece of work to show, on the day of my inspection, with her name and standard attached. Some very nice specimens of darning, mending, and patchwork were shown. In one of the schools (Turakina Valley) the boys produced specimens of sewed work, knitting, &c., second to few in my district for neatness of manipulation. A great impetus has been given to the teaching of such arts as sewing and knitting in, with one exception, all the schools in which there is a female teacher, by the judicious regulation that a reduction of 10 per cent. in the minimum number of marks for passing a standard shall be allowed, provided that the Inspector be satisfied with the efficient and systematic character of the work. If practicable, I purpose holding, in January, 1881, in Wanganui, an exhibition of sewed work from all parts of my district, when suitable prizes will be awarded to deserving pupils. In my view, this also will help to stimulate the girls to do their best to acquire proficiency in an art that is peculiarly their own.