

management and teaching. Nervousness doubtless has a certain effect, but this cannot be great, for the failures are fewest just in those cases where nervousness should most show itself—namely, in the work done orally, and especially in the First and Second Standards. It is in arithmetic and grammar—subjects that are always answered by the pupils on slates or paper—that failures are most numerous and common. In these circumstances the pupils should answer as well as they are capable on the average of doing; and I have little doubt that in the great majority of schools such is the case. Results in these subjects may disappoint an Inspector, but they should not greatly disappoint a teacher, who has tested and knows the capabilities of his class. Still, from various causes, teachers are now and then sorely puzzled and disheartened by unexpected failures. Some no doubt over-estimate the capabilities of their pupils; others neglect to accustom them to the routine of examination; while others create a degree of excitement that is highly unfavourable to accurate and representative work. The routine of examination varies but little from year to year, so that pupils could easily be made familiar with it. Neglect of this precaution causes a good many failures in rural districts. I suppose a certain amount of excitement is inseparable from annual examinations; but in a well managed and well taught school it does not materially affect the results. In some cases, however, its effects are appreciable enough. For this, I believe, many teachers have themselves to thank, as they habitually place the annual examination before their pupils in a light that tends to generate and foster the feeling in question. One further cause of failure arises from the circumstance that many teachers adjust their instruction to the range of the examinations during the past two or three years, and neglect to teach the syllabus in its entirety. Where this has been done the scholars will be unprepared for any slight change in the range of the examination. During the present year this has happened in connection with the meaning of words, and mental arithmetic, which were then for the first time introduced into every examination above Standard I.

Some information as to the standard expected in each subject may not be devoid of interest. In Standards IV., V., and VI. reading must be fairly fluent and distinct, with correct pronunciation of all words of ordinary difficulty: in addition, four words or phrases are given for explanation, two of which must be satisfactorily done. In spelling, a fair passage (usually taken from a lower book than the one the class is reading) of about four lines has to be written to dictation, besides six words selected from the ordinary reading-book or a lower one: those who have not made more than one mistake in dictation and two in the words pass. In writing, the copybooks must show fair care, and be like the head-lines; if mistakes have not been corrected by the teacher the writing is judged with greater strictness. In arithmetic, grammar, and geography a pass is granted if three-fifths of the work is correctly done; and in history if half the questions are fairly answered. Grammar (including composition) is usually examined last, and if the pupil has failed in one subject, but done fairly in all the others, the standard as above defined is relaxed somewhat. The lower standards are treated in a similar manner. To pass in a standard, pupils must not fail in more than one subject. I do not see how any one acquainted with the kind of questions set in this district can reasonably complain of the severity of the standard of proficiency exacted in each subject. It has received the most careful consideration, and appears to both myself and my colleagues calculated to encourage accurate and thorough work on the part of the pupils, without discouraging the teachers. Each Inspector has an identical copy of the pass requirements for each subject of each standard, so as to secure as great uniformity as possible. I believe that there is no more difference between the results of an examination by my colleagues and myself than between my own results on two consecutive days. From the nature of the case, no two examinations can be of exactly equal difficulty, but every care is taken to secure as near an approximation as possible to equality in this respect. In my report for last year I took occasion to point out some faults of teaching that appeared to me more or less prevalent in the district. I regret that, in public discussion of these strictures, a much wider application was given to them than I intended, or the condition of the schools warranted. The faults complained of are being slowly remedied, and I trust that more frequent visits to the more backward schools, and personal intercourse with the teachers, will expedite their disappearance.

In the teaching of reading I can report some considerable improvement. Geography and history have also been more carefully and skilfully taught than heretofore. In arithmetic increased attention is being given to blackboard drill, though the results in Standards III., IV., and V. are this year less satisfactory than usual. Composition has in most schools been better done than formerly, but in formal grammar little progress has been made in Standards III. and IV. The results in this subject, however, have suffered more than in any other from the want of familiarity with the routine of examination already referred to. Writing has been on the whole carefully superintended, the mistakes have been more generally marked, and a higher percentage of passes gained. Spelling, as usual, is one of the best taught subjects.

During the year I have devoted a good deal of attention to the object lessons. These have been given in all the schools I have examined. In a few schools the number of object lessons given has been absurdly small, not more than half a dozen in twelve months. The subjects of the lessons were for the most part suitable, and in many cases the children possessed a good knowledge of what they had been taught. I have occasionally had to express disapproval of the arrangement of the matter. Unless descriptive of animals they should be so arranged as to bring out the striking properties of the object, and then show how these properties lead up to its uses. If this connection is skilfully elicited, the exercise cannot fail to be of great value. I have been much pleased with the increased attention and care bestowed on these lessons. In the larger schools, and in not a few of the smaller ones, suitable lessons on some branch of elementary science are given, generally with satisfactory results. In no case has more than a small portion of the course laid down in the syllabus been overtaken. Elementary physics, physiology, and physical geography are the branches usually studied. I have generally found the physical geography best known, and the physiology worst. The circumstances of small schools do not admit of much attention to this part of the programme, and in some I have not objected to its being dropped.

Statements are sometimes made to the effect that pupils in the public schools have far too much