

The percentage of passes is affected here by the number of small country schools, for which it is almost impossible to find efficient teachers. This drawback is becoming gradually mitigated by the increase in the supply of young trained teachers, who can make a beginning in these schools. The converting of many of these schools into half-time schools, which will afford a better salary to the teacher, will also have a beneficial effect. The examinations are carefully made, and the results decided without any consideration as to their effects on the percentage of passes.

I consider that the discipline and efficiency of the schools have improved to a satisfactory extent during the year. There are still some subjects not taught, as a rule, in a satisfactory manner. The teaching of grammar, as distinguished from composition, is not so satisfactory as I could wish. No doubt composition is much the more important branch of this subject, we have always laid great stress on it here, with a very gratifying result. It by no means follows, however, because composition should have the first place, that grammar should have no place at all yet a good many teachers appear to assume this. I fear that in some schools sufficient pains are not taken to make the pupils understand thoroughly the meaning of what they read. There are few more pernicious habits than that of speaking words and sentences to which little or no meaning is attached. That this habit should work evil to the intellect is evident, but that is not all it produces a habit of slurring which follows the person who has acquired it into everything he or she seeks to do, be it fieldwork or housework, the putting-up of a fence or the dusting of a room. Pains are very generally taken to make pupils understand that they come to school not merely to acquire knowledge, though that is a good deal, but to be trained in habits which will stick to them through life whatever may be their calling, such as habits of accuracy, thoroughness, investigation, and honest work.

My report for last year being out of print, I now insert a few suggestions it contained as to the teaching of certain subjects, which have, I think, been found useful to some teachers:—

“In some of the schools there is considerable improvement in the reading. Many of the candidates for district scholarships read really well. On the other hand, a great many of them did not read well. There was too much running of one word into another, and dropping the final consonant, too much monotonous and unintelligent drawling. In large schools, where, of necessity, there is a great deal of simultaneous reading, the process is often excruciating. It is a monotonous kind of screaming song, without expression or intelligence. But if the art of reading, to be of any service, is an expression of the writer's thoughts, and their association with the reader's own, what sort of instruction in the art is that which produces a town crier's recitative from the reader's mouth, and a responseless lack-lustre in his eye? This is to be got over by insisting on the pupils speaking instead of singing, by making them speak in a very low tone. They will be heard much more distinctly, and the human voice, after the bird-like scream, is most grateful to the ear.

“There is considerable improvement in the writing. Some controversy has arisen as to the method of teaching writing adopted here. It appears to me that the matter is very easily dealt with. When a certain system of writing is adopted, and certain models chosen, is this system to be carried out, and are these models to be copied, or not? Is the work to be a reality or a sham? Are the children to be trained to do what they profess to do, or something quite different? It seems to me that there can be but one answer to each of these questions, anything that may be written to the contrary notwithstanding. In connection with this matter I regret that a practice is gaining ground of giving exercises to be written at home on paper by children who have just passed the Second Standard. This, in the majority of cases, will, instead of helping the teacher, heavily handicap him. Children at this stage should not be allowed to write on paper except under careful supervision. Teachers should make use of the ninth page of No. 1, Vere Foster's Copybooks, as a guide for their pupils—a guide as to size, as to slope, and as to the beginning and ending of portions of letters. They should cut out this page and paste it on cardboard, and give one card to each desk of their junior classes, and, in some instances, to the members of their senior classes. Many teachers err by ruling the slates for their junior pupils at too wide intervals. Vere Foster's hand is not half-text, and it cannot be properly written the size of half-text it is large small-hand. Again, some teachers allow of too upright writing. In many schools the pupils are not prevented from cramming too many words into each line when they transcribe or compose. When the words are crowded the letters in the words will be crowded too. Each word and letter should have plenty of breathing space. Every desk in the junior classes should be supplied with a card, having the large and small manuscript letter written upon it, with great care, as a guide in transcription. Black-board writing will not serve this purpose. It is often of necessity hurried, and besides is liable to be influenced by the state of the teacher's hand, or the state of the teacher's mind. I have found lately in some schools that undivided attention has not been given by the teacher to the writing-lesson. This, of course, cannot be allowed to continue. When it is practised the writing is inevitably bad. If a little more time is required, I would prefer that the writing-lesson were omitted on one day of the week.

“There is another evil tendency which requires to be guarded against that is the tendency to give dictation to children in the Second Standard. This is a very effectual way to teach them to spell badly. Even in the Third Standard, dictation should be used with great caution. There is some improvement in the teaching of geography, but it is still very inadequately taught. I am sometimes astonished at the ignorance of this most interesting subject shown by senior classes. Ample instructions how to teach it are given in ‘The Standards,’ and in the Board's instructions. Composition is, on the whole, very fairly taught. There still lingers, however, too much of a tendency to have recourse to reproduction in some one or other of its various disguises. The art of oral composition comes by nature, much as the art of walking does. In training to written composition we should be guided by Nature's teaching. When stilts produce ease in walking, the wooden appliances so frequently pressed on our notice will no doubt produce ease in writing.

“I have been of late pointing out to teachers that much of the work of the higher standards can be anticipated in the lower. This can be done, not only without injury to the ordinary work,