

against the practice of publishing Inspectors' reports : it is a little suspicious, however, that these objections are never urged by teachers on whose schools the Inspector has reported favourably. On the other hand, it is quite touching to read the anxiety expressed by the teachers of unsuccessful schools, lest by the publication of his report the Inspector should fail in boldness of criticism on the occasion of his next visit. As to the first of the causes just mentioned, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the appointment to the teacher's office being in the hands of competent and impartial persons, as otherwise the best efforts of the Inspector to insure efficiency in his district may be neutralised, and his time be largely occupied in merely chronicling the failures of incompetent teachers.

I need hardly say it is a matter of satisfaction to myself to be able, as I have here done, to announce improvement in the work of our schools, and to be called upon to account for it. I must not, however, be understood to mean that I am in all cases satisfied with the degree of efficiency yet attained, or to imply that there are not schools still in an unsatisfactory condition, where the teaching is weak and the results poor ; but I believe these are fewer than they were, and less inefficient. The conviction I have come to as the result of my visits to the schools agrees with the evidence of the figures just given—that better work is being done throughout the district, and greater diligence shown by teachers in their attempts to educate the children intrusted to their charge. That there are in the Board's employ highly qualified and devoted teachers, who are imparting a really valuable education to their scholars, and with whom it is a pleasure to be associated, I affirmed in my last report, nor have I seen any reason to alter my opinion.

TABLE II.—Percentage of Passes in each Standard Subject.

Subject.				Percentage in 1885.	Percentage in 1884.	Percentage in 1883.
Reading ...	...	...	...	95·6	91·2	86·2
Spelling ...	...	...	...	83·7	77·5	70·0
Writing ...	...	...	...	99·5	97·6	96·6
Arithmetic ...	...	...	...	65·4	53·7	50·8
Grammar ...	...	...	...	61·1	67·6	59·3
Geography ...	...	...	...	69·8	76·9	66·8
History ...	...	...	...	70·4	69·0	53·0

Table II. is not less instructive than the preceding one. It refers to the subjects taught, and shows in which of them progress has been made, and *vice versa*. Here, too, the information conveyed is, on the whole, encouraging, especially in the fact that the subject in which the greatest advance has been made is the important one of arithmetic, the results obtained in it being 11·7 per cent. better than those of last year, and nearly 15 per cent. better than those of the year before. I believe this improvement is very greatly due to the thorough grounding in the first principles of the science which the junior classes now receive. I am of opinion, too, that accuracy in results is now more insisted upon by teachers in these classes. I fear, however, that mental arithmetic is still a neglected subject in many schools, nor is it ever likely to be a popular one with those teachers who dislike mental exertion.

Next in order in the degree of improvement made comes the subject of spelling, which shows an advance of 6·2 per cent. With regard to the more mechanical subjects, the high percentage obtained in writing may be regarded partly as the fruit of the more systematic way in which the subject is now taught, and the greater amount of attention and thought thereby bestowed upon it. The percentage of passes obtained in reading is also a high one, and an advance of 4·4 per cent. on that of last year. Certainly, in the majority of schools this year I have found the reading boldly and correctly rendered ; nor do I call to mind any case of a school exhibiting general weakness in this part of its work. I cannot, however, approve of the practice which obtains in many schools of presenting only a portion of the reading book for examination, and sometimes a small portion ; and I take this opportunity of making it known that in future the classes will be expected to show acquaintance with the whole of the reading book. In view, however, of the new regulations, and of their probable effect upon the schools, I shall no longer insist on Royal Reader No. II. (or its equivalent) being made the reading book of Standard I., or No. III. that of Standard II. It will suffice if Standard I. presents the sequel to No. I., and if Standard II. presents Royal Reader No. II., and so on.

I regret to find a great falling-off this year in the results obtained in grammar, the percentage being 6·5 below that of last year. Again and again has the fact been forced upon my attention during the past year, whilst assessing examination papers, that the children of our schools cannot parse the words of a sentence with any degree of correctness—at all events, of any sentence requiring the exercise of a little independent thought. This is to be regretted, because parsing affords us a most valuable mental discipline by which to cultivate the discriminating faculties and judgment of our scholars—almost the only resource for this purpose, in fact, with which our curriculum supplies us. I am referring more particularly in these remarks to the parsing required of Standard IV., which is nothing more than distinguishing the different classes of words in a sentence, or parts of speech, as they are unfortunately called. In such a lesson the sentence for parsing should be carefully selected by the teacher from the reading book of the class, and should, of course, be written on the blackboard. It need not be the easiest sentence to be found in the reading book, but one the words of which cannot be classified correctly without the exercise of a little thought on the part of the scholar. The words should then be parsed orally by the class, each child being called upon in turn to determine the classification of a word, and give his reason for his decision ;