

to the promotion of real education. Without the abundant proof to the contrary which is forthcoming, one would be much inclined to believe on examination day that the only interest the teacher takes in his scholars is identical with that which the Roman generally took in his captives—viz., as useful instruments in ministering to his triumphs. The teacher should not be blamed for this; for he has so long been judged by this fallacious standard that he naturally regards these figures as the only possible means of expressing the condition of his school. Committees, no doubt, have acquired the tendency by means of the great interest they take in the well-doing of their schools, and parents from a laudable desire to see their children excel. Those who are over-anxious about the passing of their children should remember that, whereas the school minimum compulsory age is seven years, children are more frequently admitted at the age of five, and that an uninterrupted progression from the latter age brings the child into the upper standards when its mental powers are too immature to allow it a thorough grasp of the work, and therefore it furnishes another of the already too numerous mechanical products of the standard system. My short experience as Inspector has furnished me, unfortunately, with too many proofs of this.

The percentage of passes, as now computed, is of very little value in indicating the condition of a school, for the following reasons: It is calculated upon the school roll, including the infant class, the proportion of which latter to the roll number is most variable. Absentees and exceptions count against the percentage, though I cannot say that I think this objectionable, as it will, no doubt, tend to prevent scholars absenting themselves from examination, and also act as a deterrent in the case of irregular attendance. The percentage of failures gives a more directly available means of judgment of the kind derivable from mere figures. There is so much, after all, in the inner life of a school which can never be expressed arithmetically that perhaps the safest guide will be the Inspector's report upon each individual school, which may be taken to give expression to his estimate of the value of the percentages, and of what he observed which is beyond the power of percentages to express.

One thing it seems to me that the new regulations make clearly manifest—viz., that the Inspector is expected to have an opinion concerning each individual school, and the courage necessary for its free and unreserved expression.

I have reason to think that a statement of my impressions as to the meaning of the standards of instruction may not be ill-timed. The explanatory pamphlet issued by the department says (page 2): "Teachers should always remember that the standards represent the minimum of attainments of which the Inspector will require evidence at each stage." Page 9: "A teacher who knows that proportion is the soul of arithmetic, and that an equation of fractions is a form of a higher statement of proportion, will be able to anticipate much of the work of the two higher standards, and so secure more intelligent work in this lower one (Standard IV)." So much for the regulations. But I am not now considering the matter so much in connection with the amount of work a teacher can legally be required to overtake as from a higher standpoint. Teachers of small schools who, without assistance, are required to teach an infant class and six standards may, if they cover as much of the programme as possible, well be allowed to fall back upon the line of the regulations. In this grade, even, there are not wanting bright exceptions, whose only limit is that of possibility. In schools favoured with better advantages and opportunities it cannot be considered satisfactory for teachers to show too great a tendency to take shelter behind the regulations. I cannot imagine a more undesirable influence for pupil-teachers, or a more insufferable bondage for assistant teachers who have ideas of thorough work, than to be under the direction of a head teacher who consistently applies to all school work the restrictive measure of the standards. Scholars are not slow to discover and imitate the spirit which governs the teacher, and will probably have to be taught by disagreeable experience that regulation work does not pay out of school. A practical and highly successful teacher under the English code says: "In every standard the teaching should be in advance of the examination requirements." "A bare minimum of knowledge in the class is sure to result in many unlooked-for failures." Again, speaking of the introduction of analysis in grammar at an earlier stage than that fixed by the regulations, the same author says: "Against teaching in this way it may be objected that it is anticipating the work of Standard V.; but this is no reason why the work of Standard IV. should be done in an unsatisfactory manner."

It must not be supposed from my dwelling somewhat at length upon this subject that there is any serious necessity for so doing, for I can bear full testimony to the excellent spirit generally prevailing amongst the teachers. The effect, however, upon educational matters would be so lamentable if what the Americans call the "pay-day and term-end teacher" were to get a footing amongst us, that I may be excused for anticipating the possibility of such a calamity.

As to my own reading of the regulations, as expressed in the examination test-cards and the valuation of the work, I think that the accompanying schedules furnish ample proof that I have not been too exacting. My intention has been to administer the regulations indulgently—firstly, because it was the first year of their practical operation; and, secondly, because my rendering of them would probably differ to some extent from that of previous Inspectors. Seventeen schools were examined, being the same number as in 1885. The following table will enable a comparison to be made between the results for 1885 and for last year:—

	1885.	1886.
Roll number on day of examination	1,383	1,484
Number of above already passed the standard course	14	28
Within standard classification	872	994
Infant Division	497	462
Number enrolled in standard classes present at examination	828	830
Number promoted to a higher standard	579	594
Percentage of promotions—		
On roll number of school	41·87	40·00
On roll number of standard classes	66·4	59·7
On number present in standard classes	69·93	71·5