

The following table shows the chief statistics of examination for the year:—

| Classes. | Presented. | Absent. | Excepted. | Failed. | Passed. | Percentage of Passes in Standards. | Average Age. |
|------------------------|------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| | | | | | | | Yrs. M. |
| Infants ... | 7,782 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Standard I. ... | 2,663 | 41 | 41 | 130 | 2,451 | 92 | 9 0 |
| " II. ... | 2,860 | 66 | 78 | 216 | 2,500 | 87 | 10 0 |
| " III. ... | 3,076 | 94 | 153 | 615 | 2,214 | 72 | 11 3 |
| " IV. ... | 2,607 | 72 | 105 | 540 | 1,890 | 72 | 12 2 |
| " V. ... | 1,954 | 55 | 73 | 497 | 1,329 | 68 | 13 1 |
| " VI. ... | 1,082 | 22 | 31 | 172 | 857 | 79 | 13 11 |
| Above Standard VI. ... | 284 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Totals ... | 22,308 | 350 | 481 | 2,170 | 11,241 | ... | 11 6·8* |

* Mean of average age.

There were presented for examination 22,308 pupils, of whom 14,242 were entered for examination in one or other of the standards, being twenty-nine less than the corresponding number for last year. In all 13,892 were present, and were examined in Standards I. to VI. Of these, 11,241 passed the standard for which they were presented—that is to say, 81 per cent. of the pupils examined in standards passed. In recent years this percentage has been as high as 84, and last year it was 82. The percentage of failures (the exceptions being omitted for this computation) was 15·4—a result a trifle higher than those for the last two years.

The average percentage of marks for class-subjects was 54. The marks given for these subjects varied very much in different schools. In some they were lower than in any previous year, but the good schools have made up for the defect in the bad ones, and the average percentage is exactly the same as last year's. The average of marks for additional subjects was 69. The number of pupils who were absent and of pupils who were excepted continues to be low, and we are glad to find that the percentage of exceptions, which had been slowly growing for some years, has now taken a downward turn.

We give, as usual, the following table, which furnishes a rough idea of the efficiency of the schools, so far as can be tested by examination results, by showing the number of schools in which the percentage of failures was low, moderate, or high:—

| | | Percentage of Failures. |
|--|-----|-------------------------|
| 11 schools (equal to 6 per cent. of the total number) | ... | 0 to 5 |
| 29 schools (equal to 15 per cent. of the total number) | ... | 6 to 10 |
| 66 schools (equal to 34 per cent. of the total number) | ... | 11 to 20 |
| 47 schools (equal to 24 per cent. of the total number) | ... | 21 to 30 |
| 25 schools (equal to 13 per cent. of the total number) | ... | 31 to 40 |
| 10 schools (equal to 5 per cent. of the total number) | ... | 41 to 50 |
| 7 schools (equal to 4 per cent. of the total number) | ... | 51 to 78 |

A comparison of these figures with those for last year shows a considerable decline in the number of schools with a percentage of failures of 10 or less. The schools that have dropped out of this high rank go to swell the total of fair efficiency. In other respects the table shows but little change.

On the whole, the examination-results fall very slightly below the level which they reached in 1889 and 1890. The pupils of Standards I. and II. made as good an appearance in every branch of their work as in any previous year, but in all the higher standards there has been a sensible decline in the percentage of passes. We do not think that this is in any great measure due to less efficient teaching. It is sufficiently explained by the circumstance that, owing to irregular attendance and other causes, the requirements of the syllabus in drawing were in many cases not fully complied with, and by the fact that in all the standard classes we have exacted for a pass in reading a somewhat higher proficiency than in previous years.

The subjects in which most failures are recorded are grammar (including composition) and arithmetic. In composition we have found the work of an unsatisfactory character in a considerable proportion of the schools, and more especially in the smaller ones. To this subject we attach very great importance; and we take no small pains to show teachers the chief faults in their pupils' exercises, with a view to their being remedied. The commonest defect is want of matter—the pupils have hardly anything to say. We do not see that there is any good excuse for this, as we are careful to set subjects with which the pupils should be familiar. In Standards IV. and V., where this defect is chiefly found, the subjects chosen are nearly always stories or other suitable lessons from the reading books which the children have been using for a year. As an example, we may instance the story of Abraham Lincoln's life in the No. V. Reader, which contains a good deal of interesting matter. In dealing with such a subject as this a large number of pupils show no grasp of the story as a story. The essay or letter is confined to an incident or two, generally of the hero's boyhood, given very much in the words of the book. A mere fragment of the matter they should be familiar with is all that is touched on, and it is given at a length altogether disproportionate to its importance. In the better schools a brief outline of the whole is sketched out; but in many cases nothing of the kind is attempted. Now, such a state of things as this seems to be due either to insufficient teaching or to bad teaching. In most cases the scholars have read the lessons repeatedly; they