

PASS SUBJECTS.

Standards.	Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Composition.	Geography.
I. } Taught by }	54	$\frac{4}{8}$	74	54	68.
II. } the mistress }	67	$\frac{15}{11}$	74	54	56	...	50
Mean ...	61	$\frac{19}{18} = 1$	74	54	62	...	50
III. } Taught by }	80	$\frac{10}{10}$	84	74	67	74	64
IV. } the }	73	$\frac{24}{10}$	74	74	56	44	57
V. } head- }	67	$\frac{17}{8}$	84	64	36	54	} 75
VI. } teacher. }	67	$\frac{2}{4}$	84	74	63	74	
Mean ...	72	$\frac{53}{32} = 1\frac{21}{32}$	81	71	56	59	65

In the fractions of the "Spelling" column the numerators indicate the number of errors made by each class in the test, and the denominators the number of children examined in the class. A mean of 0 to $\frac{1}{2}$ error per child = excellent, of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 = very good, of 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ = good, of $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ = satisfactory, of $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 = fair.

Of course, such tables as these may be compiled in a very mechanical way. If the Inspector marks answers simply as right or wrong, without distinguishing between their good and their bad points, the thing is easy; but if, as with us, he is careful to reward what is good as well as to penalise what is bad—in other words, to credit every child with what is intelligent in his answer—the labour is very great, and, so far as its literary side is concerned, the examination is a reliable test of the condition of a school. The abuse of examinations is much too indiscriminate. There are examinations and examinations, those that are stereotyped and mechanical and therefore detrimental to education, and those the aim of which is to lay bare the working of the school, to discover the good as well as the bad points of school life and work, to scrutinise methods as well as results and to give credit for what is good in both, to suggest better methods where methods are found to be faulty, and to stimulate both teachers and taught; and we hold that ours belong to the latter category: they are critical, stimulating, and informing, and their effect upon school life and method is, in our opinion, good. We are thoroughly in sympathy with what is said against mere *pass grind*. Nothing too severe can be said of it; but a test in methods and subjects, applied with sympathy and generosity, cannot but make for good.

Many head-teachers, we are glad to say, hold quarterly examinations and keep a permanent record of the results gained by each child. It would greatly increase the usefulness of these examinations to send to the parents a copy of the results gained by their children in each subject. To this might be added a brief note or two indicating the character of each child's attendance, conduct, industry, &c. The efficiency of our school system is, in no small measure, owing to the interest taken in it by Committees and parents; and, since whatever tends to bring them into more intimate contact with school life tends also to foster and increase their interest in education, we should spare no effort to win their sympathy and active co-operation by supplying them with all the information necessary to place them *au courant* with the work of their schools.

The Board's regulation as to keeping-in and home lessons is undoubtedly a wise one, but it is not always properly interpreted by Committees. The Board disapproves of "excessive home lessons" and "keeping-in for the purpose of preparing for the Inspector's examinations." Many teachers have complained to us that their Committees allow no home lessons and no keeping-in. The latter is a suitable form of punishment for certain classes of offences, and to forbid the teacher to adopt it is to compel him either to let such offences go unpunished or to use corporal punishment for every class of offence. As to the other question, we would like to say that, while we have a decided objection to excessive and unsuitable home lessons, we consider it a serious mistake to disallow home work of suitable kind and quantity; and the mistake produces more serious consequences in the towns than in the country, for town children, many of them, with no home lessons to prepare spend their evenings in the street, take the tone of bad companions, and rapidly acquire the character of the genus *larrikin*. Conduct, it has been said, is three-fourths of life. It is the expression of character, and character is determined partly by innate tendencies and partly, and probably largely, by influences acting from without. School influences are undoubtedly good; but, with home work gone by the board, they operate upon the children during only about one-seventh of their brief school life, and, where children spend their evenings in the streets, are more than neutralised by the evil influence acting upon them there. Character is the most important element in life; and, the character of a nation being but the sum total of the characters of its component individuals, the formation of character should be the chief aim of a national system of education. Whatever tends to realise this aim should be encouraged, and it is our deliberate judgment that a wise prescription of home work does tend to do so.

One of the most serious impediments to successful work is irregular attendance. The average attendance for the colony is 82 per cent.; for Otago it is 86 per cent.—that is to say, a seventh of our pupils are always absent from school. If the same children were always absent the work of the schools would not be affected. It is the circumstance that some are absent on one day, others on another, and others on another that so seriously breaks the continuity of the work and tends so powerfully to paralyse the efforts of the teacher and to retard the progress of the children whose attendance is regular. Nothing in school life tends more to cripple the energies of the teacher than