annual visit. Although the copy-book writing in the district is fairly satisfactory, the same can by no means be said of the ordinary handwriting of the scholars as judged by the specimens produced in the written work of the examination, which is frequently very poor and occasionally abominable. At the next examination I shall use transcription from one of the reading-books as a test for writing in all schools, reverting, in fact, to my former practice in this respect.

Spelling this year is, next to arithmetic, the least satisfactory of the pass-subjects. While very good at some schools, in others it was far from creditable. At one school in the Sounds not a single scholar, out of eleven presented in Standards III., IV., V., and VI., passed in this subject. At Blenheim Boys' School it was exceptionally good, as only four failed out of 101 in the four upper standards. As the dictation and spelling tests are always given out by the teacher, no part of the weakness disclosed can be attributed to the unfamiliar voice or pronunciation of the dictator. Some teachers, until checked by me, would repeat the phrase or word several times, and no doubt are in the habit of doing so during the year. This is a practice much to be condemned, as it "has a bad effect upon the discipline by removing the necessity for attention." In the schools where I noticed this fault the failures in spelling were generally numerous. The authors already quoted make a suggestion which I think a good one, and likely to improve the results in this subject. They suggest that the "spelling bee," which was so much in vogue some years back, should be utilised in schools. A spelling bee might be held once a month in each class, limited, of course, to the words that had been previously met with in their reading or other books. If properly managed, and some small prize or privilege were awarded to the "last out," it would excite much interest in the subject. In the higher standards, if not in all, each scholar might have the right to suggest one or more words, and I believe that the scholars would take much more interest in this portion of their work, and would derive much benefit and no little enjoyment also from some application of this "entertainment" to their school life.

Arithmetic: It is not easy to account for the notorious fact that this subject, though taking up fully one-fifth of the whole school time, invariably produces the least satisfactory results, and that relatively the largest proportion of failures should be found not in the smaller, but in the larger schools. Probably this weakness is due to one or more of the following causes: (*a*) Defective methods of teaching; (*b*) insufficient care in the examination of the daily work; (*c*) the prevalence during the year of the practice of copying; (*d*) overconfidence of some of the brighter scholars at the examination; (*e*) carelessness on the part of others; (*f*) the slovenly formation of figures, leading to numerous mistakes; (*g*) want of methodical arrangement of the various stages of the work. Probably all these defects help to bring about the unsatisfactory results referred to, and most of them might be laid at the door of weak discipline. No fault can be found with the tests supplied by the Department this year, as they are well within the limits of the syllabus; indeed, comparing them with questions set by me at Westland for the year 1879, which I have now before me, I am surprised at the difference, both in the number and the nature of the questions, compared with those considered sufficient at the present time; yet the results obtained were better than they were here at this examination. The questions then set for Standard VI. were twelve in number; for the Fifth, ten; for the Fourth, eight; and, for the Third, eight; against five in each standard at the present time. One cause of the success of the Westland schools at the time referred to was the fact that the scholars had a choice of questions, the number they were required to work being (as nearly as I can remember) seven in Standard VI. and six in the other standards. This was a great advantage to the scholars, and was, I think, a fairer test of their real progress. Another very important advantage enjoyed by the Westland schools at that time was the fact that no failure was recorded unless the scholar had attended 75 per cent. of the number of times that the school had been open since the previous examination. No doubt if similar advantages were enjoyed now there would be a marked improvement in this as well as in other subjects, and a better state of things might be revealed than is manifest under the present system. There appears to be a pretty general opinion amongst Inspectors that the quantity of work required in arithmetic by the present syllabus could be considerably lessened without injury to the cause of education; but, although I shall probably find myself in the minority, I cannot think that this is either necessary or desirable. I should very much prefer to see a reduction in the number of subjects demanded, without any great relaxation in the requirements of those retained. With arithmetic, as with grammar, the mere practical utility of the subject to the vast majority of the scholars attending our primary schools is quite of secondary importance. In these days of high pressure and competition in all walks of life, but especially in business and mercantile pursuits, this is very evident. No bank clerk, for instance, would waste his employer's time in calculating the interest on an overdraft, the discount on a bill, or the value of an annuity, but would simply turn to a set of tables and take out the figures in one-tenth of the time that even an expert arithmetician would calculate them. In fact, in ninety-nine out of every hundred cases the ability to add up long columns of figures rapidly and accurately is of far more practical value than all the rest of the arithmetical work of the syllabus. So that if the question of practical utility in after-life is to be alone considered, then, indeed, a very extensive reduction in the present requirements would be both possible and advisable. A high authority on education (Dr. Fitch) says of arithmetic, "It is conspicuously one of those subjects of school instruction the purpose of which extends beyond itself. You cannot measure its intellectual usefulness by looking at its immediate aims"; and a few lines further on he describes it as a "science, because it investigates principles, because he who unearths the truths which underlie the rules of arithmetic is being exercised not merely in the attainment of a particular kind of truth about numbers, but in the processes by which truth of many other kinds is to be investigated and attained." Many similar opinions on the subject of arithmetic are to be found in works by authors of repute, and I cannot believe it would be advantageous to true education to reduce to any great extent the present requirements of the syllabus.