

Board then succeeded to the charge of 16 of the above schools, the Board of North Canterbury retaining 103, and also having allotted to it two schools established in the County of Kaikoura, and an aided school at Waiau. The number of children on the rolls of schools in the North Canterbury District was, on 30th April, about 12,167, with an average attendance of about 9,323. These figures are not absolutely correct, as the Board had no return for the March quarter from the Kaikoura schools, the attendance at which is estimated from the Inspector's reports; but any error arising from this cause must be but very small. At the end of the year the number of schools was 110; the number of children on the rolls, 13,359; and the average attendance, 10,076. It has been usual, in former reports, to draw up a tabular comparison of the number of schools and of the attendance year by year, beginning from the first establishment of the Provincial Board of Education in 1863. Such a statement cannot be presented in this report. As has been already explained, the boundaries of the district are materially altered. Under these circumstances no comparison can be drawn with the past years, and it is only possible to supply such data as will, from a fresh starting-point, form a basis of comparison for the future. It is meanwhile satisfactory to note that the average attendance has already so increased as to have made up a considerable part of the numerical loss sustained by the division of the district, and it may be anticipated that in another twelve months the numbers will fully equal those which, two years previously, had belonged to the whole area of North and South Canterbury.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The examinations for scholarships were held in June, and were conducted by Professor Cook and J. V. Colborne-Veel, Esq. The number of candidates examined was 86—viz., in Class A (under eleven years of age), 22 boys and 5 girls; in Class B (under twelve), 22 boys and 7 girls; in Class C (under thirteen), 20 boys and 6 girls; in Class D (under fourteen), 3 boys. On this occasion the boys and girls, for the first time, competed on equal terms as to age. The successful candidates were—in Class A, J. Turner, Catherine Lamb, and J. Zachariah; in Class B, Ellen Pitcaithly, E. Searrell, and Margaret Lorimer; in Class C, Leonard Chapman and Herbert McClelland Inglis. No scholarship was awarded in Class D, as none of the competitors succeeded in making the required minimum of marks.

NORMAL SCHOOL.—The Normal School exhibits a rate of progress equal to that of the other branches of the work of the Board. The number of students, which at the end of the year 1877 was 53, had increased by the end of 1878 to 63, and at one time during the year had reached 71. A large number of the students have completed their course of training, and are going in for the certificate examinations. An important addition was made in the latter part of the year to the plan of the institution by the establishment of a kindergarten school, under the superintendence of Mrs. Crowley, a lady of great skill and experience in the principles and methods of kindergarten teaching, who has been specially engaged by the Board for the management of this department. It is intended to proceed at once with the building of the kindergarten schoolroom—a most necessary work—the plans for which have been for some time in preparation. The report of the Principal of the Normal School will be found in the Appendix.

SCHOOL INSPECTION.—The reports of the Inspectors, Mr. Restell and Mr. Edge, are also given in the Appendix. They have evidently been prepared with care, and, while affording encouraging hopes of progress, do not fail to draw attention to such matters as, in the judgment of the Inspectors, stand in need of improvement. They will be read with interest by all who seek for reliable information as to the present state of teaching in this district.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE.—The Board is not yet in a position to make any definite report as to the effect of the compulsory clauses of the Education Act. It must be observed that these clauses come into operation only by resolution of a School Committee, and then only within the district under the supervision of such Committee. There is nothing in the Act to require a Committee to report to the Board the fact of its having passed such a resolution, but it is believed that few of the Committees have decided on adopting the clauses. The Board is aware of only one instance in which they have actually been put in force. Possibly, in some cases, a sense of a certain degree of unpopularity likely to attend a stringent enforcement of the law may not be without its influence, and many Committees are disposed to view these clauses as a useful instrument *in terrorem*, and prefer to trust to their indirect efficacy rather than attempt to overcome indifference or hostility by direct compulsion. But the principal reason for allowing these clauses to remain inoperative is a consideration of the expense. The Board has no funds available for the purpose, and any cost incurred by a Committee in using the power vested in it by law must be defrayed from the incidental allowance, which is already insufficient for its ordinary expenditure. The Board regrets its inability to afford the needful assistance, and trusts that the Government will recognize the importance of supplying such means as are required to enable the Committees to discharge the duties which the Legislature has intrusted to them.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES.—Appended is a list of public libraries which have received a share of the subsidy voted by Parliament. In this district, however, the libraries are not under the control of the Board, but are established under the Public Libraries Act or Ordinance, and managed by committees elected by the subscribers. But, although there is no legal connection between them and the Board, it sometimes happens that the committee of the library and the School Committee consist of the same persons, and that the library itself is kept in the school or in a building forming part of the school premises. In such cases the Public Libraries Subsidies Act may ultimately have the effect of bringing the libraries into some degree of relation to the general school system.

REGULATIONS.—The Board has been acting during the past year under the regulations which were in force at its commencement. Many of these have become obsolete, or have been more or less set aside by subsequent Orders in Council, and the whole will require revision in order to bring them into harmony with the state of the existing law. The Board will give early consideration to this matter, and the results will find their proper place in the report of next year.

The Hon. the Minister of Education.
8—H. 2. (App.)

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JOHN INGLIS, Chairman.