

Inclusive of the pupil-teachers, the male and female teachers at the close of 1879 were almost equal in number, there being 885 of the former and 888 of the latter. The proportion of female teachers employed by the Boards seems to be on the increase, the addition to their number during the past year having been 103, while only 60 additional teachers of the other sex were engaged. It is only in the case of assistants and pupil-teachers that the females preponderate, for the above summary shows 659 masters to 278 mistresses. The ranks of the assistant masters and mistresses in the larger schools, as well as of the head teachers in the smaller ones, are now recruited to some extent from the ranks of the pupil-teachers; and, although the returns show only 9 pupil-teachers in excess of the number employed twelve months previously, yet a large number of the latter had been advanced to the positions of assistants or head teachers, and their places filled by others drawn from the head forms of the schools. Care will be taken in future reports to furnish information as to the number of boys and girls from the public schools who had entered on their apprenticeship as pupil-teachers within the year, and the number of pupil-teachers who had been promoted during the same period to the full position of school-teachers on the expiry of their several terms of service.

Table B shows that the different Boards employ the services of pupil-teachers in somewhat unequal proportions, and that, out of the 113 male pupil-teachers at the close of last year, no fewer than 99 were employed under the five Boards comprised within the Provincial Districts of Canterbury, Westland, and Otago. This cannot be owing to any objection on the part of the other Boards to the employment of pupil-teachers, for the proportions between the northern and southern Boards in the case of female pupil-teachers are not far from equal. Perhaps the profession of the school-teacher is as yet less attractive to the young men of the North than it seems to be becoming to those of the South. A comparison of Table B with the corresponding summary on page 4 of last year's report will show that, while there had been a falling-off in 1879 to the extent of 5 in the total number of male pupil-teachers, the number employed in the five southern districts just referred to had increased from 84 to 99, and that the number in the other seven districts had fallen from 34 to 14.

The average number of scholars per teacher over the whole of the schools at the close of the past year was about 33·1, as compared with 51·4 twelve months previously, and with 29·8 two years ago. There is an increase in the average per teacher in almost every education district; and, as might be expected, the more sparsely-peopled districts, which have of necessity the larger number of small schools, show lower averages than the others; thus the lowest averages are in the Districts of Taranaki, Westland, and Auckland, and the highest are in Otago, Southland, and Wellington. It is possible that some of the Boards, such as those of North and South Canterbury, may be somewhat more liberal than others in their supply of teaching-power to the schools; but, as a rule, it may be taken for granted that the greater the proportion of large schools in an education district, the smaller, within proper limits, is the aggregate number of teachers needed in proportion to the school-attendance. In some districts, such as that of Otago, there are comparatively few very small schools, and many are large enough to admit of two or more teachers being employed in them. In these large schools the classes also are large, and it is evident that a given number of children equal in attainments can be more easily taught in one class than the same or even a smaller number of children of unequal attainments distributed into two or three classes.

#### SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

Although the regulations requiring stated and carefully-prepared returns of the school-attendance were for a time regarded by not a few of the teachers as unnecessarily burdensome and vexatious, yet the results have been in a high degree satisfactory. The uniform attendance-registers and summaries which are supplied to all the schools, the method of calculating the attendance prescribed by the regulations, and the quarterly returns required under them for each school, have greatly facilitated the collection of complete and reliable information of a uniform character respecting school-attendance throughout the entire colony. Much difficulty was experienced by some Boards in getting the forms of return properly