

ance has returned to about its normal condition, and that the unfavourable circumstances which brought last year's percentage of attendance down to 76.6 have not been operative to any great extent during the year under review. This year will show how far the provisions of "The School Attendance Act, 1894," will avail to increase the average attendance. With the object of giving this Act a fair trial the Board has appointed truant officers to enforce the statutory attendance, and hopes that the expense thus incurred will be more than repaid by the extra attendance which is expected to result from the employment of those officers.

**TEACHERS.**—The number of teachers employed in schools under the control of the Board at the end of the year was seventy-eight (twenty-five males and fifty-three females), of these, one male and ten females were pupil-teachers. There were also two sewing-mistresses. With one exception all the adult teachers employed at Board schools are certificated, on the other hand, the teachers of most of the aided schools are uncertificated; nor is it possible to obtain the services of certificated teachers for the very small remuneration that, as a rule, is afforded by such schools.

**BUILDINGS.**—Several new buildings have been erected this year, the most important being the new infant school at Blenheim, the enlargement of the Grovetown School, an addition to the Fairhall school, and a caretaker's cottage, Board-room, and office at Blenheim. A couple of rooms for the teacher's use were added to the school at Fabian's Valley, and the teacher's residence at Marshlands was enlarged. The Board also purchased a strip of land at Blenheim from the Public Works Department, being the abandoned railway-line. Upon a portion of this the Board's offices and the caretaker's cottage have been erected, and it is intended at some future time to construct a swimming-bath on the remaining portion. A large expenditure was undertaken to improve the schoolgrounds at Blenheim, which have been levelled and graded to allow the water from the frequent floods to pass freely and quickly away. This work is still incomplete, and it is proposed to finish it during the current year. For some years past it has been the intention of the Board to erect a school at Okarainio in a central position, and to do away with the Birchwood aided school. The difficulty of obtaining a suitable site has hitherto stood in the way, but at the time of writing this difficulty has been removed through the generosity of a settler in that neighbourhood, Mr Charles Inman, who has given an acre of land for the purpose, and the erection of the school will be proceeded with at once. The large increase in the attendance at the Canvastown School calls loudly for increased accommodation the present site, however, is so exceedingly—indeed, dangerously—steep that to enlarge the present building—which is one of the oldest in the district—would be almost impossible. The Board is met here also by the difficulty of obtaining a suitable site, and efforts are being made to obtain one from the Maori reserve across the Wakamarina River. At Onamalutu the shifting of the population to the upper end of the valley has necessitated the erection of a school on a more central site, which will be secured for the purpose. The small balance on Building Account shown in the Board's balance-sheet will have been exhausted by the time this report is in the hands of the Minister, and the Board hopes that, in view of the many pressing demands for minor works, as well as the three new schools referred to above, the Minister will deal as liberally as possible with the Board when allocating the building vote, and trusts that the amount apportioned to Marlborough will be transmitted with the least possible delay. In the earlier days of the Board's existence many schools, and most of the teachers' houses, were built (with a view to economy) of white-pine. Some of these are badly infested with the so-called dry rot, and must at no distant day be rebuilt.

**SCHOLARSHIPS.**—Three scholarships were held during the year 1894, two of these expired at the end of the year, and two were awarded at the beginning of 1895. The reports from the principals at the Boys' and Girls' Colleges at Nelson as to the progress and conduct of the holders of the Board's scholarships have been most satisfactory.

The Board is of opinion that the existing methods of awarding scholarships is far from being equitable, inasmuch as the districts having the advantages of secondary schools within their reach are far more liberally provided with scholarships than the smaller districts, where no means of secondary education are available. If all scholarships could be competed for on equal terms, and the competitive examinations could be conducted somewhat on the lines of the Civil Service examinations, the best talents, wherever found, could be thus provided with the means of further development. Under a system of colonial scholarships it would also be possible to reduce the age at which (in some cases) the scholars from the primary are translated to the secondary schools, and to increase the tenure of the scholarships to three, or even four years. If the last-suggested alteration necessitated the granting of fewer scholarships, their real benefit would, on the whole, be much increased. The poorer members of the community, for whose benefit it is presumed the scholarships are mainly provided, can seldom afford to allow their children to continue their scholastic career at the expiration of the two years' tenure, and that time is wholly insufficient to afford the full benefits of secondary education, particularly in the cases of scholars whose previous teaching has been received at primary schools only.

The almost entire absence of any endowment for secondary education in Marlborough was brought under the notice of the department in a memorandum dated 27th June, 1894, and a similar memorandum was forwarded to the Minister of Lands. It was therein pointed out that, practically, there is no provision for the support of secondary education in Marlborough, that extensive areas of pastoral leases in the district would shortly revert to the Crown and urged that, when disposing of these lands, the just but long-neglected claims of this district should be considered, and a liberal provision made for secondary education. At present the total revenue derived from secondary reserves applicable to Marlborough amounts to £9 per annum. Under these circumstances, the Board hopes that the claims of this district will be fully recognised and satisfied when the opportunity above referred to arises.

The annual returns and the Board's balance-sheet have already been forwarded to the Education Department, as also have the Inspector's reports.