

decrease of no less than 622; while the number of schools to be maintained by the Board has increased from 163 in 1890 to 202 in 1898, being an increase of thirty-nine. As there has been no corresponding decrease in the population, the causes that have produced this increased expenditure and diminished income must be sought elsewhere. And here it is satisfactory in a political sense to know that the principal cause has been the more widely distributed population in the pursuit of agriculture, which has compelled the Board to follow the settlers with schools into districts previously occupied by merino sheep. Another cause has been the opening of denominational schools in the larger country centres of population, which have somewhat diminished the attendance at the Board's schools without lessening the required number of schools, and very rarely, if ever, reducing the number of teachers. Yet a third cause unfavourably affecting the average attendance during the last two years has been the prevalence of measles, which has been so general as not only to lower the average attendance, and consequently to lessen the whole capitation grant, but in many cases to increase the expenditure of the Board by the necessary employment of relieving teachers to take the place of those affected by the epidemic. Apart from these disturbing causes, it will be seen from the same table that there has been during the whole period that the present Education Act has been in operation a very satisfactory and steady increase in the daily attendance as compared with the roll-number, ranging from a percentage of 73·83 in 1878 to 85·05 in 1897. Such a record may safely be accepted as a pleasing evidence both of the increasing efficiency and the growing popularity of the Board's teachers and schools.

TEACHERS' APPOINTMENTS.—Early in May last a well-considered and valuable letter was received from the North Canterbury Branch of the New Zealand Educational Institute, suggesting some important alterations in the system adopted by the Board in the appointment of teachers. The most important practical recommendations were that the Board should make a better use of its official acquaintance with its teachers' work, and discourage canvassing as far as possible, by selecting in no case more than six of the best applicants for a vacancy, and by sending the selected names to the School Committees arranged in order of merit. After careful consideration both of these suggestions were recommended by the Appointments Committee and adopted by the Board, as being more fair to its best teachers and more helpful to the Committees in making their selection by the advice of the Board rather than by the solicitation of the candidates. This alteration has worked well, and has led to some very satisfactory appointments, but should be now followed by a discontinuance of the practice of sending to the School Committees the names of those candidates who have not been selected by the Board, but who may nevertheless be teachers of high merit, who should suffer no suspicion of reproach from the mere fact that the competition in any particular case was too formidable for them to succeed.

EXAMINATION AND INSPECTION OF DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS.—In February, 1898, the Board very carefully took into consideration, and very fully debated, an application from the Very Rev. Father Cummings, Vicar-General of the Roman Catholic Church in New Zealand, requesting the Board to appoint and employ Inspectors to examine and inspect the denominational schools under his direction, with the result that the Board decided that the request was one that could not be granted. To the majority of the Board it appeared to be altogether anomalous that Inspectors appointed and paid by the Board should be employed to either examine or inspect denominational schools, and to report either to the denominational authorities, who are not their employers, or to their employers, who have no voice or interest whatever in the management or control of such institutions. But, apart from this self-evident anomaly, the payment of Inspectors to examine or inspect denominational schools would be a violation of the present Education Act, and the very heavy responsibility of their selection for such a purpose a task for which the Board is in no way qualified and in no way authorised by its constituents to perform. But, as the Government require an official educational certificate as a qualification for certain positions in its service, the Board considered it desirable that every facility should be given for that purpose to the pupils of any private or denominational schools, without any interference with such schools, or without any special or separate examination. With this object in view, the Board, at its meeting on the 11th May, unanimously resolved to instruct its Inspectors to give not less than seven days' notice of the date upon which they proposed to examine any State school which might be the nearest to any private or denominational school or schools, the Secretary of the Board, on receiving such notice, to forthwith inform the person or persons in charge of such private or denominational school or schools that they can on that date send any candidates for a pass either in the Fourth or Sixth Standard, to be examined by the Board's Inspectors under precisely the same terms and conditions as those applied to the scholars of the State schools; and the Inspectors of the Board were authorised and instructed to receive all such scholars as might present to them a written request from the manager or principal teacher of such schools, and, after due examination, to forward to such manager or teacher a duly signed formal certificate for each scholar who successfully passes such examination such as may be required by the provisions of the Factory Act or for admission into the Civil Service. In the course of the debate on this subject the large general question was raised as to whether Inspectors should be appointed with power to enter and inspect all schools not under the control of the State, with authority to insist upon a certain degree of secular efficiency; and at its meeting on the 22nd June the Board passed the following resolution: "That this Board expresses the opinion that it is desirable that all private schools should be subject to annual inspection and examination by the State, as a guarantee that every child in the education district is receiving a sound education, as required by the Act; and that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Minister of Education."

REGULATIONS.—The questions of corporal punishment and of home-lessons have both come rather prominently before the Board during the past year, and although no very exact of formal decisions were arrived at, yet the written opinion of the Principal of the Normal School on the one