

until the appropriations from the colonial revenue became available for the purpose; and this has necessarily led to a very large expenditure not only on buildings, but also on the purchase of school sites. Auckland, Napier, New Plymouth, Wanganui, and other towns in the North Island were in almost the same position. With very few exceptions all of the school-buildings in Westland District that belong to the Board have been paid for out of the votes of the General Assembly, and the district is as yet inadequately provided with teachers' residences.

In addition to the sum of £100,000 for school-buildings for the financial year 1879-80, guaranteed to Boards by "The Immigration and Public Works Act, 1878," the General Assembly voted a sum of £75,000 specially for the purpose of enabling the Government to place the more necessitous education districts in circumstances of greater equality with the others as regards school-buildings. With a view to ascertain as accurately as possible the circumstances of the several districts, a circular, of which a copy is appended, was addressed to Boards inviting them to forward returns showing, as at 1st January, 1880, the state of their building accounts, their liabilities in respect of works under contract, and an estimate in detail of the new works considered necessary to meet their wants. Tables 9 and 10 of the Appendix contain summaries of the returns made by the Boards in reply to the circular. The returns show that at 1st January, 1880, the aggregate of the Boards' available balances and of their liabilities under contracts, amounted to £56,167 12s. 5d. and £56,789 4s. respectively, and that the Boards' estimates of the cost of necessary works, in addition to those under contract and provided for by available balances, amounted to £163,896 4s. 7d. To meet this demand there was only an undistributed balance of £50,000 available, leaving an aggregate of unsatisfied claims to the extent of £114,000. Table No. 10 contains a summary of the number, size, and cost of the schools and teachers' residences represented by Boards as necessary at the beginning of the present year.

The vote of £175,000 passed by the General Assembly last year for school-buildings has been apportioned as follows: Auckland, £40,000; Taranaki, £5,000; Wanganui, £10,000; Wellington, £16,000; Hawke's Bay, £11,500; Marlborough, £2,700; Nelson, £8,000; Westland, £10,700; North Canterbury, £24,500; South Canterbury, £9,250; Otago, £28,500; and Southland, £8,850. The grant for Wellington includes £2,500 for an Educational Museum and a Training College.

INSPECTION AND EXAMINATION OF SCHOOLS.

The regulation which directs that each Inspector shall make an annual return of the number of children in each school subject to his inspection who pass from a lower to a higher standard during the year, is not strictly applicable to the circumstances of the schools in the year 1879. In some districts there had been no previous classification according to standards, and the standards which were in use in other districts were not those now prescribed by Order in Council. Most of the Inspectors, however, have made returns of the number classified by them in each school under each standard since the 1st of July, the day on which the Order in Council came into full operation. In some cases great additional value is given to the returns by including in them statements as to the ages at which children pass the standards, or are presented in them. Other things being equal, the best school in a district is the school which passes a larger proportion of children than any other in the district, and at a lower average age; and a district is making progress if year by year the proportion of passes increases, and the average age of passing becomes lower. A comparison of this kind, however, cannot fairly be made between one education district and another without taking into account the possibility of a difference of judgment between the Inspectors of the two districts with regard to the interpretation and use of the standards. It is worthy of note that children of eleven years old have passed the Sixth Standard, and that boys and girls of more than fifteen years have been presented for the First. It seems fair to conclude that the standards are not unreasonably high, and that some of the young people who have been lately brought under instruction were formerly in a deplorable condition. The average difference of age between the children who pass one standard and those who pass the next above it, ought to be a test of the fairness with which the standard work is divided