

last census 2,022 ; there are, perhaps, 200 children attending private and denominational schools. The Board deplores that over 500 children in the district are growing up in ignorance. Some of these children, owing to the extreme remoteness of their dwellings, it is impossible to reach, but others live within easy distances of the schools. Educationally, the district is subject to great disadvantages in having a scattered population, and in being subdivided into a number of long and narrow portions by the physical features of the country. This peculiarity renders a number of small schools necessary, and as small schools cannot be so economically administered as large ones, the result is that, under the present mode of State support, districts in open country furnished with good roads and extensive lines of railway by means of which children can be brought from considerable distances to central schools, are enjoying educational luxuries, while in districts like Taranaki the school buildings are homely, the teachers inadequately paid, and the greatest parsimony is needed in order to keep out of debt.

HALF-TIME SCHOOLS.—Half-time schools are very unpopular, and the people in the district in which they are established are constantly chafing under the idea that they are denied a fair share of their educational privileges. The progress of children in these schools is also very small. They have generally been conducted by men, women being unequal to the task of travelling on the miry forest roads in winter. In some instances the Board has found it more economical to place small schools on full time under the superintendence of female teachers. The Albert Road School was re-opened in November last as a half-time school in connection with the Lower Kent Road School, and it is now a half-time school in connection with the Upper Kent Road School, and the Lower Kent Road School is a full-time school under a female teacher. The Albert Road and Upper Kent Road Schools, and the Lower Egmont and Smart Road Schools are now the only half-time schools in this district.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.—The number of schools in 1878 was 25, and in 1879, 31 ; the increase for the year being six. The new schools are situated at Lower Egmont Road, Koru, Wortley Road, Norfolk Road, Waipuku, and Upper Kent Road. A school building is now in course of erection at Tarururangi, and, when finished, a school will be immediately established in it. Schools will be shortly needed at Stratford, Midhurst, Opunake, and Sentry Hill. At the latter place workshops in connection with the railway are being erected, and a village of workmen's cottages will probably spring up around them.

ALTERATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS.—A new schoolhouse has been erected at Tikorangi to accommodate 100 children, and the old schoolhouse has been converted into a teacher's residence. The Kawau schoolhouse has been enlarged, and an infants' gallery erected within it. At Manutahi a teacher's residence has been built, and an infants' gallery added to the schoolhouse. At Nuerangi general repairs have been executed on the school building. Water tanks and eaves troughing have been supplied to such schools as needed. Closets and screens have been supplied to most of the schools in accordance with the instructions contained in Circular No. 36, and the school sites are being fenced in as far as funds will permit.

SCHOOL SITES.—In country districts the school sites are in no instance less than one acre in extent, and in most instances they contain several acres. On these sites, the teacher, when he chooses, has a garden, and there is sufficient pasturage for the horses of the children who come from far.

WORKS IN PROGRESS.—At Inglewood the teacher's house is being enlarged. At Egmont Village a new schoolhouse is being built, and the old building is being converted into a teacher's house. At Oakura a new schoolhouse is in course of erection, and the old schoolhouse is being used for the enlargement of the teacher's house. At West Waitara a new building is in course of erection in lieu of a hired schoolhouse. In New Plymouth the East School teacher's residence is being enlarged.

WORKS NEEDED.—In New Plymouth a girls' schoolhouse is urgently required, the present schoolhouse being a hired building and unsuited for school purposes. The boys' schoolhouses also need enlargement, and a teacher's residence is much needed at the West School.

TEACHING STAFF.—The Board's staff of teachers consists of 16 male teachers, 11 female teachers, 6 assistant female teachers, one of whom is a sewing mistress, 1 female pupil teacher, and 3 male pupil teachers, and 2 sewing mistresses.

MIXED AND UNMIXED SCHOOLS.—The rule which the Board has generally followed with respect to the sexes, is to have separate schools for the sexes in large districts, and mixed schools in small districts, and to have the mixed schools under the charge of a female teacher.

SCHOOL REGULATIONS.—The provisions of the 84th section of the Act have been strictly carried out, excepting as regards music, drawing, and elementary science. The Board, however, is making attempts to introduce these subjects of instruction into the schools. The dual desk has been introduced and gives very great satisfaction. Sewing is taught in the girls' and mixed schools, either by the teacher or by a sewing mistress. The Board, however, regrets to find that its efforts in this respect are not seconded by the children's parents.

SCHOOL COMMITTEES.—The experience of the Board with regard to School Committees has not been satisfactory, they having been either apathetic, or hostile, or extravagant. As a rule the committees of this district are apathetic, while those which are active require curbing, as regards prerogative, and especially as regards expenditure.

HIGH SCHOOL.—The Board has obtained from the School Commissioners a very healthy, commodious, and beautiful site for a High School on the southern boundary of the town of New Plymouth, and within a very short distance of a railway station, and plans have been prepared for a building to accommodate 50 children, and will be submitted to the Government. A property situated near to the centre of the town, and granted to the Board for High School purposes by the New Plymouth High School Act, 1878, has been set apart for a master's residence. The Board has a revenue of £200 per annum arising from reserves set apart for secondary education, which it purposes to devote to the salary of the master. In addition to this it is entitled to 10,000 acres of land by the 4th section of the above recited Act, but owing to some technical difficulty this land has not yet been allocated. The Board has the sum of £750 in hand for building purposes, besides which a grant of £1,000 by way of advance was voted for this purpose during last session, the payment of which has not yet received the sanction of the Government.

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The Hon. the Minister of Education.

BENJAMIN WELLS, Chairman.