

women teachers will have to be largely depended on to fill positions where the salary will not command the services of a trained male teacher. The experience of the Board has been that female teachers are equally efficient as male teachers for small schools.

ATTENDANCE.—The attendance for the year shows an increase of 107 on the school roll, and an increase of 182 on the average. Last year the percentage of attendance on the school roll was 71; this year it is nearly 73, showing that a more active interest is taken in the work of education throughout the whole of the school districts by the parents of children and the School Committees. On the whole the progress of education in this district is satisfactory when the difficulties which stand in the way of regular attendance at schools are considered. Small farm holdings are the rule in Taranaki, and the aid of the children in performing part of the minor work of the farm cannot at all times be dispensed with. The heavy rainfall during the winter months makes some of the bush district roads almost impassable for the smaller children, which helps in lowering the average of actual attendance. The Board is satisfied that the quality of the teaching power is improving, and better results are being obtained in cultivating the intelligence of the children. This is the only progress that can be expected when the majority of the children leave school for the ordinary work of life before the Fourth Standard has been fairly entered on, and only 5 per cent. of the children on the school roll pass the Fourth and higher standards; so that if all Government aid ceased after the child passed the Fourth Standard it would not practically affect this district or materially reduce the expenditure on primary education.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—Six scholarships were competed for during the year, and were awarded to P. White, S. A. Atkinson, E. F. Fookes, S. Rennell, F. Veale, and Alice Smaller. As Percy White did not take up the scholarship, it was awarded to Arthur Taylor. As the scholarship examination is conducted on the lines of a Fourth Standard examination, and the age of the competitors confined to thirteen years and under, the results have not proved it to be a fitting test for detecting that natural ability which warrants the expenditure of scholarship fees in providing for higher education. The Board will therefore reconsider the whole subject, with the view of imposing a higher standard test, and increasing the limit of the age of the candidates. It is also desirable that, if a successful candidate resides in the country, and is unable to attend the High School without residing in New Plymouth, a large allowance be made, so that the scholarship can be accepted.

DRAWING.—Though drawing is now a part of the primary system of education, its compulsory teaching has not been long enough established to show any great practical result. It is a step in the right direction, and is the only subject taught that is in some measure linked with that technical education so much desired by many as a subject for public school teaching. Girls receive in all our schools instruction in needlework, and in this respect receive some technical education which fits them for their future position in life. It appears a matter for regret that boys do not receive some similar instruction suitable to their sex which will be useful to them in after years. There is no doubt that the spirit of the age tends in the direction of some measure of technical training in our public schools, in order that boys may more readily acquire a knowledge of the mechanical trades. The almost universal abolition of the system of apprenticeship under which boys acquired great manual dexterity has left a void which imperatively demands attention from the Government in the interest of the colony. It may be said that this is not a function of the Government: the difficulty appears to be to decide what is and what is not a function of the Government. If the giving of a literary training to children is a function of the Government, it would be difficult to prove satisfactorily that teaching children the elementary use of tools is not also a Government duty.

SEWING.—The Board has carried out its professed intentions of providing for the teaching of sewing in all the public schools. A committee of ladies have kindly undertaken the examination of the sewing and the awarding of honours. They have expressed approval of the work of the year, and hopes are entertained of great progress in the future. The question of the appointment of a trained sewing mistress to teach a proper system of teaching, and generally inspect, will probably have to be considered when the system is more completely in working order and the funds of the Board will permit, as it is very desirable that specially-trained skill be brought to bear on this branch of female education.

BUILDINGS.—At Bell Block a new schoolhouse has been built during the year. This school has been designed to accommodate a hundred pupils, and is provided with lavatories and cloakrooms for both sexes. The warming and ventilation is efficient. The light is only admitted from the south, and cross lights are thereby avoided. The total cost is £3 3s. per pupil. At Upper Waiongona a small schoolhouse has been provided by removing a portion of the Inglewood School buildings, which were replaced by a new building. This new school has been a great convenience to the district, and the number of pupils promised by the settlers has been in steady attendance. The Stratford schoolhouse has been enlarged to accommodate the increased attendance, and more conveniences have been provided for the comfort of the pupils. The Frankley Road schoolhouse has also been enlarged; and the Opunake schoolhouse strengthened, and more convenient classrooms provided. Residences are required at Huirangi, Bell Block, and other districts, and a new school is urgently needed in the bush district of Tariki Road, where there are children who are unable to attend any existing public school owing to distance and bad roads. Schools are also required in the Kina Road, Eltham Road, and Waihi District. The Waitara schools require to be consolidated into one large school, where greater facilities can be obtained for classification, and consequently the promotion of greater efficiency in teaching. In New Plymouth the Central School requires enlarging to accommodate the children now being taught in the Courtenay-street School, and thus promote better organization of the teaching staff, with corresponding benefits to the children. To carry out these very desirable objects will require a sum of money in excess of the usual building grant, and only the most pressing cases can be undertaken during the ensuing year.

MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS.—The determination of the Government to apply the building grant to new works only has to a certain extent disarranged the Board's finance, as the ordinary fund has now to meet such charges as painting and ordinary repairs. The Board admits the justness.