

Ruahine, Cheltenham, Halcombe, and Taonui Schools, which, in open competition under the auspices of the Feilding Agriculture and Pastoral Society, were awarded by the examiner, F. Y. Lethbridge, Esq., 179, 161, 158, and 149 marks respectively, out of a possible 200.

**OBSERVATION SCHOOLS.**—The observation schools for last year were Rawhitiroa, Okaiawa, Whenuakura, Mokoia, Westmere, Silverhope, Raetihi, Glen Oroua, Apiti, Longburn, and Taonui. These are schools selected by the Inspectors at the beginning of each year. To them, under certain conditions, teachers may resort for the purpose of seeing approved methods and management.

**SICK LEAVE.**—The Board had adopted the principle of making no deduction of salary from a teacher who is absent from duty through illness, considering that it is at such a time that loss of salary would be most severely felt. This is a strain on the Board's funds in providing payment of relieving teachers, but it is not found that there is any attempt on the part of teachers to take unfair advantage of this privilege.

**HOLIDAYS.**—The Board has established the principle of term holidays—a week in May, a week in September, and a general holiday at Christmas. Teachers are in all cases required to hold their periodical examinations a week before the holidays begin.

**FREE BOOKS.**—On the recommendation of the Inspectors, the Board accepted the Department's offer to supply free books, but not without some misgiving. The arrangement unnecessarily loads the Board with further responsibilities, and increases the work of the staff. Respecting these books, a circular has been sent to the head teachers requiring that such precautions shall be taken in connection with their use as seem to be suggested by considerations of cleanliness and the principles of sanitation. The Board is of opinion that free books for the lower standards were not really asked for by the people; the cry was for uniform books, a concession that might have been made without impairing educational efficiency or the self-respect of the people; in any case, it is excessive cost of books for the higher standards that calls for relief.

**PROMOTION, TRANSFER, AND APPOINTMENT OF TEACHERS.**—No one not engaged in the actual administration of schools can realise the immensity of work placed on the Boards which desire to carry out efficiently the alterations provided by the new scale of staffing and salaries. The position of every teacher in the district has to be carefully considered, the effect of removal to another school reviewed, and unfair promotions in the same school prevented. One effect of the new system will work unfavourably for some schools—viz., where a teacher at the maximum of a grade leaves, and another of equal ability has to be obtained at the minimum of the grade, while the abolition of the previous method of substituting an assistant for two pupil-teachers or adding a pupil-teacher's salary to that of an assistant, reduces the elasticity so necessary to secure smooth working. The Board carefully considered the provisions of the new amended Act with regard to the appointment of teachers, and came to the conclusion that the first consideration was the making of appointments by transfer with the object of removing inequalities, preventing the retention of teachers at schools where the attendance had fallen considerably, giving deserving teachers a certainty of promotion, and reducing inefficient teachers to grades where they could do good service within the limitations of their abilities. In order to carry that out effectually the Inspectorial staff have graded the teachers according to their attainments, ability, experience, and enthusiasm for their work, and periodical revision of this list will be made as occasion requires. In the event of there being no necessity to fill a vacancy by transfer, the system adopted in the past of inviting applications and forwarding the names of suitable applicants is to be continued.

**BUILDINGS.**—During the year new schools were built at Tokaora, Gonville, Raumai, Rongoiti, and Tokorangi; and new residences at Hautapu, Wangaehu, Opaku, and Owahakura. Additions have been made to Kapuni, Fitzherbert East, St. John's (Wanganui), Kaponga, Alton, Raetihi, and Queen's Park Schools, and to Table Flat, Auroa, Kaponga, Poukiore, Raetihi, Makino Road, Awahou, and Kapuni residences. Shelter sheds were erected at Parawanui, Makotuku, Okaiawa, and Apiti Schools. Rata School was removed and added to; and repairs were effected at Kakarama, Westmere, Patea, Silverhope, Jackeytown, Waverley, Hawera, Pohangina, Mangaweka, Kimbolton, and Sedgebrook Schools, and Hiwinui, Warrengate, and Kairanga residences. In addition to the above works, contracts have been let for new schools at Main South Road and Makakā; over £400 has been expended on painting; and drainage amounting to £737 17s. has been carried out at Campbell Street, Eltham, Feilding, and College Street Schools. The demands on the building grant increase year by year, and there are certain desirable, necessary, and even urgent works which, through the inadequacy of this grant, the Board has been unable to face. There is a number of buildings erected more than twenty years ago which, because of their insanitary situation or economical construction, have either to be rebuilt or almost entirely reconstructed, and these present a problem not solved by the amount of the maintenance grant, or any theoretical idea about the life of buildings, or the setting aside of a reconstruction fund. As settlement advances, and the standard of living increases, better buildings are required, and a school or residence considered good enough for a back-block settlement becomes a reproach to a closely populated town. In regard to residences especially, the difficulties are very great. In districts where houses are unobtainable, it is generally the case that the cost of building is heavy, while the fact of one room being attached to a school is made a reason why a teacher with a family is not granted house-allowance; and as no grants have been made by the Department for residences for some time, it is impossible to face the question of building. It may be difficult for the Department to come to a conclusion as to which course to pursue in this matter, but the whole matter is one of urgency, and the health, comfort, and well-being of the teachers necessitate strong representations being made in this matter.

Finding considerable difficulty in getting buildings erected under the contract system in out-of-the-way localities at the sum allowed by the Department, the Board initiated the experiment of employing its own staff of carpenters, under an efficient builder. Although in its infancy, the method adopted promises to secure economy and efficiency, and seems capable of considerable extension.

**OFFICE ACCOMMODATION.**—During the year the Board endeavoured to secure the right to the ground on which the present suite of offices is situated—which is a Government reserve, uninvested in any department—but without avail. The rooms are unequal to the accommodation of the staff and the necessary fittings, and the business of the Board has accordingly to be carried on in three different parts of the town. The question cannot be allowed to rest where it is, and the Board looks to the Department to support any further claim made for an assured tenancy of