

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Blenheim, 7th April, 1885.

I have the honour to forward you the report of the Education Board of the District of Marlborough for the year ending the 31st December, 1884.

THE BOARD.—The three members who retired in March were re-elected, and the names of those constituting the Board were A. P. Seymour (Chairman), Hon. Major Baillie, and Messrs. Dive, Henderson, McHutcheson, Parker, Paul, Sinclair, and Ward. Towards the close of the year W. E. Dive, Esq., resigned his seat in consequence of his leaving the district, and the vacancy was filled by the election of John Allison Lambert, Esq. The Board held twelve meetings, with an average attendance of $6\frac{1}{2}$ members.

SCHOOLS.—As last year there were twenty-six schools open, fifteen of these being wholly supported by the Board, the remainder being aided schools. During the year one school which was on the list of fully-kept Board schools was changed into an aided school, one aided school has been closed, and a new one opened, leaving fourteen Board schools and twelve aided at the close of the year.

ATTENDANCE.—In 1883 the number of scholars on the roll was 1,453, and the working average for the year was 1,098; the working average of the last quarter was 1,141. At the end of 1884 the average weekly roll stood at 1,450, and the working average for the whole year at 1,140·75, showing that the attendance has just maintained the working average of the December quarter of the previous year, with the same number of schools at work.

TEACHERS.—The teaching staff consisted of males 21, assistants 2, pupil-teacher 1; females 6, assistants 6, pupil-teachers 9—total, 45; being an increase of 3 on the previous year—namely, 1 male teacher, 1 male pupil-teacher, 1 female pupil-teacher.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The examination for the scholarship of the Nelson College resulted in its being awarded to Laura Mathews; but as she preferred remaining where she was and accepting a pupil-teacher's place, the Board conferred the scholarship on John McCallum, who stood second in the examination.

BUILDINGS.—Last year's report showed that the completion of the school-house at Picton and the erection of a new one at Havelock, both comparatively large works, together with the repairs which were most urgently needed to other buildings, had not only absorbed our building grant but also the balance to the credit of the Maintenance Account, so that during this year the expenditure on buildings has been necessarily of the most meagre character, amounting to about £314, and of this sum only £114 could be used for new buildings. The consequences of this miserable economy are most unmistakeably making themselves felt. We are compelled to repair buildings on which our architect urges us to waste no more money. We are forced to ask School Committees to try to procure rented houses for their head-teachers—a most unthrifty proceeding, if we are to pay £30 to £40 a year for dwellings, which could be far better supplied at a prime cost of from £200 to £250 each at most. Out of a long list of buildings which should all be painted, we are compelled to ask our architect to select a few of the very worst, and to these only can we do scanty justice. All our buildings being of wood, it seems scarcely needful to point out to you how unwise it is for the colony to neglect that protection to its buildings which no thrifty person would omit. The portion allotted to us out of the last Parliamentary vote for buildings was £846, a sum which scarcely equals one-half of our most urgent requirements; and although we have during the past month of March very thankfully received an additional sum of £300, with which we shall be able a little to extend our list of most needful works, yet it is certain that in this district, in consequence of the population being thinly scattered over a large area, with an ever-pressing demand for small schools in country places, and there being so few schools large enough to pay their own cost, leaving a balance towards the support of the smaller ones, we are quite unable out of our ordinary grant to keep pace with the demands on us for increased accommodation, and for the same reason nothing can be spared out of the maintenance-money, for, after exercising the utmost care, we find that the ordinary grant is quite exhausted by the current expenditure on the maintenance of our schools.

EXPENDITURE.—Last year's deficit on the Building Account, amounting as then reported to £748 6s. 10d. more than the sum granted for that purpose, was met partly by the balance which stood to credit of maintenance and partly by an overdraft, which at the end of the year reached £244 19s. 3d. The sum therefore we have been able to expend on buildings was necessarily very small, amounting only to £314 5s. 4d. On maintenance during the year, £4,847 3s. 10d. was received, and £4,889 3s. 7d. was spent, omitting a small charge for interest of £2 10s. 9d. fairly chargeable to Building Account. The result then is much the same as last year; that is, our current expenditure on the maintenance of our schools has again slightly exceeded the income furnished, the difference being £41 19s. 9d., and we began the year 1885 with a credit balance of £242 4s. 11d. on the whole account.

I have, &c.,

A. P. SEYMOUR,
Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education.