

SCHOOL COMMITTEES.—The harmonious relationship hitherto subsisting between the Board and School Committees throughout the district has been fully maintained during the year. The abstracts of accounts for the year 1894–95 have been duly received and the results summarised. Generally speaking, so far as has come under the cognizance of the Board, the accounts appear to have been carefully and methodically kept; and, with but few exceptions, no fault could be found with the accuracy of the returns as submitted to the auditors. In a few instances, however, Committees did not appear to realise the importance of obtaining and preserving for the auditors' use proper receipts for amounts—many of them trifling, it is true—disbursed during the year. In the isolated cases referred to the Committees' officers should bear in mind that an auditor's duty is to accept nothing on trust, but to pass only those items for which proper receipts are produced: this remark, of course, applies to all expenditure, whether the individual items be great or small. Committees should also bear in mind that by the Board's regulations no portion of the Board's contributions to the school fund may be spent on school prizes, *fêtes*, or entertainments. Expenditure for such purposes can be justified only when the amount so expended has been locally raised.

It is very gratifying to report that no less a sum than £834 7s. 9d. was last financial year contributed locally by the various districts for school purposes. This large sum assisted very materially in providing many schools with conveniences and improvements which, in all probability, could not otherwise have been obtained. For such works as shelter- and fuel-sheds, ornamental fencing, and extra aids for teaching certain subjects, especially science, object-lessons, and kindergarten exercises, the Board usually contributes pound for pound, and this provision is largely taken advantage of throughout the district. The Board is again glad to have an opportunity of testifying to the cordial co-operation of School Committees in all that tends to the promotion of the true educational welfare of the district.

INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS.—Under this heading but little has to be recorded. The Inspectors' report is sent herewith, and therein reference is made in detail to the progress of education throughout the district during the year just closed.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.—For the first time under authority of the Board, and by request of the managers, the Catholic schools at Invercargill, Gore, Queenstown, and Arrow have been subjected to the usual examination test by the Board's Inspectors. This new departure adds somewhat to the work entailed on the Inspectors, whose time is now very fully occupied.

TEACHERS' QUARTERLY RETURNS.—These returns are, on the whole, made up with great care and exactness, and forwarded well within the prescribed limit of time allowed for their receipt. If this enconium were of universal application the necessity for this paragraph would scarcely arise, but as the exceptions only prove the rule, so is it in this connection. Some teachers (a very limited number, it is true) do not appear to realise the great importance of thorough accuracy in the preparation of returns that involve considerations so serious. On the average attendance as furnished by these returns are calculated the amounts paid to Boards by the Government in the way of capitation-grants; and on the same basis are calculated the salaries paid to teachers, and the school-fund allowances to Committees. Teachers are, or ought to be, aware of these facts, and in consequence might be expected to compile and furnish the returns of attendance at their respective schools promptly and without the possibility of error. It is rarely the case that in any one quarter some returns have not to be referred back for completion or correction. This procedure, when it is rendered necessary, involves vexatious delay in forwarding to your department the usual summary of attendance returns for the whole district.

TECHNICAL SCHOOL.—The Board has to report the successful inauguration of a technical school during the year. A building to accommodate about forty students was erected on the site of the Board's new offices, and a commencement made in technical training by the institution of carpentry classes under the supervision of the Board's architect, the following copy of whose first report shows that a satisfactory beginning has been made: "I have the honour to report *re* the work and progress of the technical school during the first quarter of its existence. Both the boys' and teachers' classes have been attended beyond expectation. The boys' class had a roll-number of 36, and the teachers' class 15; the average attendance for the quarter being 28 and 11·3 respectively. Great interest was taken in the work in both classes, and I can only speak in terms of highest praise of the attendance, conduct, and diligence of all the students. The only drawback was the lack of time to properly superintend the boys' class so as to obtain the best results. They were nearly all beginners, and consequently needed a greater amount of attention than would otherwise have been the case. The time at disposal (two hours) had to be divided amongst them as best possible, but even then the average time I could be beside each to go over them all while at work could not exceed about three minutes, and most beginners need almost constant attention. In spite of this, however, all managed to get a good idea of the handling, &c., of the various tools, and the method of dressing up and jointing timbers. Some of the work done was indeed very creditable. The students provided their own tools and material used, and this fact acted as an incentive to them to gain the value in knowledge. The work undertaken was entirely preliminary, and comprised a description of the tools, the method of sharpening them, the sawing, dressing up, and jointing pieces of timber in various forms. The students assembled first in the small room, where the work of the day was explained and demonstrated to them. Then they went to the benches and followed the instructions given, while I assisted them as far as I was able. They all were engaged on the same work, otherwise it would have been impossible to have made any headway at all. In this way they gained much in theory: perfection can only be attained by constant practice. The teachers' class was a very interesting one. There the already trained mind grasped the rules much more quickly, and the progress made was very gratifying. Especially would I commend the diligence of the female members of the class, pluck and determination making up for the want of physical strength. To sum up, the work of the first quarter may be regarded as a