

affecting school-children. Reference to the last two columns of Table B will show that the falling-off in regularity of attendance during the year was greatest in Wellington, Marlborough, Westland, and Otago; hardly so marked in North Canterbury; and indicated in a still less degree in Auckland, Nelson, and Southland. On the other hand, in Taranaki and in the Grey district there was a decided advance in the regularity of the attendance; and Wanganui, Hawke's Bay, and South Canterbury were also better in this respect.

It is worthy of remark that the average daily attendance for the fourth quarter was only 107,904, or 2,619 less than that for the fourth quarter of 1897. The totals of the average daily attendance for the first three quarters of 1898 and 1897 respectively were 111,040 and 111,150, which show a much smaller decrease for 1898 than appears from a comparison of the fourth quarter.

Even if we make allowance for the sickness that affected the attendance of school-children by adding 670 to the average attendance for the year, we still find that it is less than that of the year before.

TABLE B.—SCHOOL ATTENDANCE FOR 1898.

Education Districts.	Roll-numbers.				Average Daily Attendance.				Average for the Year as Percent- age of the Mean of Average Weekly Roll of Four Quar- ters — 133,783 for 1898; 133,361 for 1897	1898.	1897.
	Pupils at Be- ginning of Year.	Ad- mitted during the Year.	Left during the Year.	Pupils belonging at End of Year.	Fourth Quarter.			Whole Year.			
					Boys.	Girls.	Total.				
Auckland	25,623	11,612	9,678	27,557	11,507	10,478	21,985	22,809	80.7	81.0	
Taranaki	3,632	1,600	1,251	3,981	1,691	1,501	3,192	3,242	80.9	77.8	
Wanganui	9,525	4,175	3,495	10,205	4,212	3,898	8,110	8,451	80.8	80.4	
Wellington	12,849	6,875	5,292	14,432	6,104	5,475	11,579	11,728	80.8	82.2	
Hawke's Bay	7,205	3,388	2,817	7,726	3,335	2,956	6,291	6,551	84.4	84.1	
Marlborough	2,071	622	572	2,121	883	886	1,719	1,751	81.0	82.7	
Nelson	5,663	1,870	1,618	5,915	2,452	2,243	4,695	4,826	80.2	80.5	
Grey	1,526	440	283	1,683	715	738	1,448	1,435	85.0	82.7	
Westland	1,889	347	359	1,377	583	575	1,158	1,204	83.9	85.3	
North Canterbury	19,880	6,635	5,896	20,619	8,817	8,133	16,950	17,384	82.9	83.5	
South Canterbury	4,914	1,493	1,210	5,197	2,341	2,145	4,486	4,466	86.2	86.1	
Otago	20,472	6,493	5,781	21,184	9,572	8,887	18,459	18,536	86.1	87.4	
Southland	9,143	3,133	2,652	9,624	4,128	3,704	7,832	7,873	80.5	80.7	
Totals for 1898	123,892	48,633	40,904	131,621	56,340	51,564	107,904	110,256	82.4	82.9	
Totals for 1897	123,533	48,756	40,092	132,197	57,504	53,019	110,523	110,993	82.9	..	
Difference	359	-123	812	-576	-1,164	-1,455	-2,619	-737	-0.5	..	

An examination of the total roll-numbers in Table B shows there was an increase at the beginning of the year in the number on the roll, but considerably less than the normal increase; in the number admitted during the year there was a decrease; in the number left during the year, more than twice the normal increase; and in the roll-number at the end of the year, a considerable decrease. These facts, with the fact of the diminished rate of increase last year, seem to point to some general causes affecting the number of children entering and leaving the schools. Among the causes that might be assigned are: (1) Excess of emigration over immigration; (2) greater laxity in sending children to school; (3) an earlier age of leaving school; and (4) diminishing birth-rate. The first of these possible causes we know not to have operated, as immigration has exceeded emigration since 1892; we have no reason to suppose the existence of the second cause; the third and fourth causes seem to have been operative, (3) slightly, as a natural result of the gradual lowering of the age at which the standards are passed; while, with regard to (4), the returns of the Registrar-General show that the birth-rate has been falling rapidly for some years. There was a marked decrease in the birth-rate in 1892, and this might be expected to show a marked effect on the school-roll five or six years later. That is exactly what appears to have happened. In the absence of further information we must, however, be careful as to what relative weight we attach to causes (3) and (4).

From a comparison of the figures in Table B with those in a similar table in last year's report, district by district, it will be observed that only in four