

and are willing, and indeed eager, to offer themselves as what might be called "stipendiary monitors," for even the small remuneration of £12 a year. The help thus afforded to sole teachers of schools with from twenty-five to thirty-nine in average attendance would be an immense relief, especially when, as is frequently the case, all the standard classes and the preparatory classes are represented. The Board therefore regrets that Government did not see fit to adopt the recommendation of the Education Conference of 1899, to the effect that "The annual payment to Boards be not less than £4 per pupil, and that the smaller districts receive special consideration over and above the £4 capitation." The capitation of 11s. 3d., *plus* £250, now given to all Boards, should be considerably increased in all districts having less than 2,000 in average attendance, especially since the subsidy for inspection has now been abolished.

BUILDING FUND.—At the end of the year under review the Board's Building Account was indebted to the General Account to the amount of £800, and the Board has been compelled to refuse, or to postpone indefinitely, all expenditure on buildings until this indebtedness shall have been removed. The facts that many of the school buildings in Marlborough were erected before the Education Act came into force, and that the amount that was then available for buildings was extremely small, rendering it absolutely necessary that the most parsimonious economy should be exercised, thus involving the use of the cheapest and least durable of timber—white-pine—in their construction, all contribute to the cause of the comparatively heavy demands now continually made upon the Board's Building Fund for the repairs and renewals of buildings that are rapidly becoming untenable. Several teachers' houses are in the last stages of decay, and the so-called dry rot is unpleasantly conspicuous in both schools and residences that have been standing for thirty years or upwards. The expenditure, too, on buildings in newly settled districts has been in excess of the extra votes granted for the purpose. Now that the grants for teachers' salaries have been specially "ear-marked" for that purpose, it is impossible (as it is decidedly undesirable) that the Board should do as it has been compelled to do in times past—*i.e.*, meet these demands as far as possible by applying a portion of the funds intended for salaries to building purposes.

A considerable expenditure has been forced upon the Board during this and the preceding year by the necessity of taking advantage of favourable opportunities for purchasing several allotments of land contiguous to the Blenheim School site. This was originally an exceedingly cramped and unsuitable playground for a school with a roll number close upon five hundred. Moreover, it was surrounded by several tenements in close proximity to the building, which were a constant source of danger by fire, to say nothing of sanitary objections. These dangers have now been completely removed by the purchase of the said allotments, and the removal of the buildings erected thereon; and now the Board is in possession of the whole block in a ring fence and bounded on all sides by public streets. This has been a heavy drag on the Board's resources, and there is still a liability of £350 to complete the purchase; but the Board feels sure that this expenditure was not only judicious, but absolutely necessary both for the safety of the school buildings and for the health and convenience of the scholars. The value of land in this vicinity is steadily rising, and if these opportunities had been neglected a very much higher price would have been demanded for the properties hereafter.

Many demands upon the fund for new buildings, for replacing decayed buildings, for furniture and appliances, to say nothing of petty repairs, must be held over indefinitely unless a very substantial addition is made to the customary building grant to this district. No help can be looked for from the Committees, since they all complain of the insufficiency of the allowance they now receive, and it will be evident from what has been said above that it is entirely beyond the power of the Board to increase these allowances to any appreciable extent.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—There are now fourteen scholarships held at the Marlborough High School, including those awarded in December last. These are partly supported by the statutory grant of 1s. 6d. a head, and partly by contributions from the School Commissioners' Secondary Reserve Fund. In addition to these scholarships, eight scholars who would otherwise have been unable to attend the High School have been granted free places therein by the Governors, under the terms of the Marlborough High School Act. There are also two others—the Carter Scholarship, founded by the late Thomas Carter, and one provided for this year by a private person. The parent who, as mentioned in my last report, last year gave up his son's right to a "country" scholarship of £35 a year for a "town" scholarship, in order to extend the benefits of secondary education to as many as possible, has again this year repeated his liberal action. Another son having gained a "country" scholarship, he has given it up in favour of a winner of a "town" scholarship who was unable to take advantage of it on account of her distance from the school. Such unselfish consideration for the good of others is not so common as to be unworthy of mention in a report of this nature, and the Board hopes that other well-to-do members of the community may be inspired to emulate the example of the person alluded to who, with characteristic modesty, "does not wish a fuss made about it."

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION ACT.—No attempt has been made in this district to establish classes under this Act. At the request of the Board, Mr. Isaac, an "Organizing Inspector," was sent over to deliver a course of lectures on such subjects as can be taught in the ordinary schools. The Board requested the Committees to allow their teachers to close their schools for a week in order to attend these lectures. Nearly all those within reach of Blenheim by public conveyance did so, and their travelling-expenses were paid out of the special vote for that purpose. Time will show whether any permanent interest has been aroused amongst the teachers who attended, but it is hoped that many of them will make an effort to introduce one or two of these subjects into their schools. As far as the outside public are concerned, there does not appear to be any general desire to take advantage of the facilities offered under the Act by the establishment of special classes, no applications, even for information, having yet been made to the Board; and it must be evident to the Minister from what has already been said in this report that the Board is powerless to do anything in this direction unless it can be made entirely self-supporting.

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The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

A. P. SEYMOUR, Chairman.