

teachers, by enabling them to accumulate a mass of reliable records of their scholars' work throughout the year, thus giving them the means of pronouncing judgment on each at the end of the year, with the almost absolute certainty of a fair and just decision. If the use of this or some other form of register were made compulsory in all schools, the work of the Inspector at the annual visit might be confined to a careful examination of this record, with, probably, a general confirmation of the results arrived at by the teacher. At the schools where these registers have been used during only a part of the year it was scarcely necessary for me to examine the scholars myself (although I did so). In the few cases where my results differed from those of the teachers of these schools the ultimate decision was arrived at after consultation upon each case separately.

To sum up the whole, I can say confidently that nearly all the Marlborough schools are in a fairly satisfactory condition, and that some of them need not fear comparison with any schools of the same grade in the colony. In the few cases where the apparent results are not quite so satisfactory as might be expected it must be remembered that the results of a single examination, however carefully conducted, can only give an approximate estimate of the real value of the work done. Sometimes, too, there are disturbing influences, unknown to the general public, which have prejudicially affected the year's work; and in such cases we must expect better results when those influences have ceased to operate. In one case where the results of the year's work were not so good as they should have been the teacher had recently suffered a severe bereavement, which may have had a dispiriting effect upon his year's work. In another the school appears to have outgrown the power of the present teacher, and unless this surmise is disproved at the next annual visit it will be necessary to make a change.

The M.H.R. medals were this year awarded to a girl at the Renwick School and a boy at the Canvastown School.

*Free Secondary Education.*—Although not perhaps strictly within the scope of an Inspector's report, the magnitude and importance of the new departure may be sufficient excuse for my referring to it. The offer of the Government to give free secondary education to all primary-school pupils under the age of fourteen years who have passed the Sixth Standard indicates a laudable desire to place all classes of the community as nearly as possible on an equal footing in this respect, and no doubt the cost, which will be considerable, has been counted. In the year 1900 the number of scholars who passed Standard VI. was 6,365, and in 1901 the number was 6,854; or the average for the two years was 6,609. The average age of passing the standard throughout the colony was thirteen years eleven months. Now, assuming that only half of these 6,609 were within the age-limit (fourteen years) at the end of 1902, and that of this half only one-half would avail themselves of the offer, there would be 1,650 scholars to provide for in the first year. Assuming the number of passes in Standard VI. to remain constant, there would be 3,300 free scholars during the second year; and, allowing only half of those admitted in the first year to pass the Inspector-General's examination, the third year would find 4,125 scholars, costing the country £24,750 annually; while in the fourth and every succeeding year the amount required would be £29,700 per annum, to say nothing of the interest on the large amount of money that must necessarily be spent in enlarging buildings, providing furniture, &c.

Of course, the expenditure as above estimated must be reduced by the amount of capitation paid on account of such of these scholars as now remain at the primary schools after passing the Sixth Standard. In 1901 these numbered 2,657, and, supposing the Seventh Standard to be abolished, this would mean a saving of £10,628 at £4 per head, leaving the net cost of the new scheme £14,122 per annum. Large as this amount is, it would be money well invested if the whole, or a large majority, of these students were thereby rendered better men and women and more useful citizens than they would have become under ordinary circumstances. But this is highly improbable, and all the advantages that the State would derive from this liberal expenditure could be more certainly obtained, at a far less cost, by the selection of the brightest intellects throughout the colony by the establishment of a liberal system of scholarships, equally open to all classes of the community within the same limits. This would, moreover, be fairer to the country districts that are far removed from any secondary school, since the free places could not be accepted by the greater number of country scholars on account of the expense of living away from home. The effect of the new arrangement upon the finances of Education Boards would not be very great, though always in the direction of a reduction of their already insufficient revenue. The total amount of such reduction for New Zealand would amount, at 11s. 3d. a head, to about £1,500 per annum. If, however, the free secondary education "has come to stay," some modification of the present syllabus for primary schools will be found expedient, in order that the two systems may work smoothly and in harmony without the overlapping that now exists. It is well known that at present holders of Education Board scholarships are at a great disadvantage on entering the High School, because, although well grounded in the subjects of the primary-school syllabus, they have, as a rule, no acquaintance with Latin or mathematics, and cannot at once fall into line with the High School class, with which their other attainments would have connected them. This is a great disadvantage not only to the scholars themselves, but also to the teachers of the High School. The work of the Sixth Standard should therefore be arranged so as to prepare the scholars who pass that standard for the work they will be required to do in the lower forms of the secondary schools, perhaps by the discharge of some subjects, such as history, science, &c., and substituting some two of the following: English grammar, higher arithmetic, elementary algebra, geometry, or elementary Latin. Some alteration of this kind would be equally desirable in the case of scholarship-holders; and, as a revision of the primary-school syllabus has long been contemplated, perhaps some change in the direction indicated may be already under consideration.

*Scholarships.*—The examination of candidates for the Board's scholarships was held on Tuesday, 23rd December last, at the Blenheim Borough School. Twelve of the fourteen candi-