

38 to 46. The latter result is especially pleasing. Part of this improvement, was, however, doubtless due to the holding of Standard VI examinations late in the year, which gave from one to three months' extra time for preparation. Forty of those gaining proficiency or competency certificates were in the Sixth Standard for the second year.

In private schools thirteen certificates of proficiency and of competency were awarded. Of these, six proficiency certificates and one competency were awarded to pupils that had been in Standard VI for two years.

ATTENDANCE.—In 1906 the average for the colony was 86.9 per cent., and for Marlborough 85.3. The year 1907 showed a falling-off, the average for Marlborough being only 84.6. In part the fall may have been owing to epidemics of measles, whooping-cough, and diphtheritic throat. But these do not account for all, since they were most prevalent during the latter part of the year, whereas the quarterly averages were 84.8, 83.9, 85.6, and 84 per cent. respectively. It is evident the truant-officer's hands require strengthening. During the year instructions were issued to head teachers around Blenheim to give the officer full lists of absentees not complying with the requirements of the Act. The teachers may render aid in other ways. Sometimes attendance certificates have been earned by the children but not applied for. These should be looked forward to as valuable prizes. They are certainly important recommendations to youths applying for situations. In various districts supplementary inducements are offered in the way of book prizes, special honours to the best class each week, drawing graphs of attendance on the wall of each class-room, &c. It does not take much to stir emulation in children. Mr. Bird, Inspector of Native Schools, reports that at a Native school, with less than thirty pupils on the roll, twelve first-class and five second-class attendance certificates were granted. The attendance at our chief town having been so low for so many years, it may be worth explaining that a first-class certificate is awarded to all children present every half-day on which the school is open, and a second-class to those that do not miss more than five half-days. Summary of truant officer's report: Number of informations, not recorded; convictions, 21.

At the close of the year we had only five certificated sole teachers, as compared with ten last year, and fifty uncertificated, as compared with forty. The training colleges are not yet working up to their complement. Inasmuch as practically every district is crying out for certificated teachers, it appears that there are barely sufficient of these institutions. Since 1903 the number of certificated teachers in the colony has dwindled from 2,482 to 2,418 at the end of 1906. In the same way the uncertificated have increased from 546 to 789. In addition to the above, there is one instructor in cookery and one in woodwork, and this Board shares with three others the services of one instructor in agriculture. Of the seven pupil-teachers, five had some qualification beyond Standard VI. A few of the uncertificated teachers were similarly qualified—Partial D, Matriculation, or Civil Service Junior. Regulation 5, Examination and Classification of Teachers, bears harshly on the teachers in our small schools: "No teacher shall be classified until he has taught for two years in a school with an average attendance of not less than sixteen." Such a minimum school would probably have a roll of twenty pupils scattered throughout all the standards. Many authorities consider thirty is the minimum number a teacher should have in his sole charge. It appears therefore that the line might have been drawn lower down. There are forty-four schools in Marlborough whose teachers are considered as not gaining any experience in their present employment; the Board therefore joined with Nelson in protesting vigorously against the above-mentioned regulation.

During 1907 two conferences of educational authorities were held in Wellington—a Conference of Inspectors of Schools and a Conference of Principals of Training Colleges and Members of Boards of Advice. A remit from the former received scant attention at the hands of the latter. The remit was, "That the Training College Conference be asked to take the question of the training of unclassified teachers into favourable consideration." Result: "No action was taken." Evidently this Conference required the presence of Inspectors from districts where the small schools are relatively numerous. At present we are dependent on sporadic action of the governing authorities of the training colleges. It is due to the Board and to the Principal of the Wellington Training College, Mr. Gray, to mention their efforts to do something in this matter by gathering a class of country teachers in Wellington for three weeks' special tuition. This gathering was held in July–August last year, and proved so successful that I hope to see the experiment renewed. A middle course suggested by the Otago Board may commend itself to the Department—namely, "Should any such teacher succeed in qualifying for a certificate arrangements should be made for giving him three or six months' training and some allowance for support."

READING.—The readers generally in use are "The Imperial" and the *School Journal*. The upper standards obtain a considerable amount of extra reading by perusing the *Journals* in the lower classes. These are generally interesting enough to prove attractive, and the fact that the language is simpler does not detract from their merit. Reading has been defined in two ways. Under the first the mere mechanic art of reading is alone considered; under the second come the reading and general treatment of a passage, so as to show both an appreciation of the thought and sympathy with the writer. Young teachers need to be reminded that the former sometimes degenerates into mere eye reading—a vicious scanning of the words without having the meaning penetrate the brain. The latter cannot be obtained without a considerable amount of paraphrasing by teacher and pupil, and this leads to studies in word-building, dictation, and forms of expression. It is to emphasize the necessity for this continual progression from reading to explanation (oral and written composition), and thence to studies in the craftsmanship of literature, in spelling and word-building, and memorising of the beautiful when clearly conceived—it is apparently from these considerations that the syllabus sums up reading, spelling, writing, composition, and recitation, and calls them all "English." In all schools a good dictionary should be found. Ogilvie's Shilling Dictionary is probably the best for its size. The chief defect noticed during the year