

throughout the length and breadth of Southland, till it is no longer a reproach that the school grounds are the worst kept of all attached to public or to private buildings.

In a great many of our school districts the sanitary arrangements are very far from being perfect. Conditions, indeed, frequently prevail which would not be tolerated for a day in the homes of those who are responsible. Some advantage might accrue were the Department to issue a pamphlet showing clearly the necessity for cleanliness in the school and its surroundings, and describing in plain untechnical language the steps necessary to this end.

*Maoris.*—During the year the attention of the Department was drawn to the temporary withdrawal from our schools of children of Maori descent, who accompany their parents for a period of about eight weeks on their annual mutton-birding expeditions, and to the serious effect such withdrawal had on the progress of these children and the well-being of the schools which they attend. It was pointed out to the Department that the parents of these children had probably friends or relatives who might be induced to take charge of them during the absence of their parents, especially if some monetary assistance were offered. It was argued that the boarding-allowance of 2s. 6d. per week on account of each pupil, who, in order to attend school, had necessarily to reside away from home, might fairly be claimed for such pupils. The Department, we are pleased to say, admitted the justice of the contention.

*Irregular Attendance.*—During the year it was discovered that the monthly truancy returns sent in by a large proportion of our teachers were more or less incomplete. In these cases an amount of absenteeism ranging from 27 per cent. downwards was shown entirely unaccounted for except by the general explanation, given in some instances of "sickness," "inclement weather," &c. The evil results of such a practice are manifest. It is extremely important, therefore, that teachers should prepare the monthly statement of attendance with the greatest care: the details of attendance of each child reported as well as the general quality of the attendance should be accurately set out, and the column referring to "Reasons for absence" should be duly filled in as far as the information procurable by the teacher will enable him to do so.

*The Syllabus.*—Considerable dissatisfaction has been expressed among teachers (not altogether unreasonably) concerning the delay of the Department in issuing the revised syllabus. It is very generally felt that the syllabus should have been made available a month or two at least before the end of 1913, to allow of teachers having their annual schemes of work ready for the reopening of the schools in February. If it is put in force during the present year it will not only necessitate the preparation of fresh schemes, but will certainly disorganize the work of the schools. For a considerable time, too, we have felt the necessity for revising the list of text-books for use in our schools. Needless to say, this task cannot be undertaken till surmise as to the issue of the revised syllabus gives way to certainty.

*Teachers' Salaries.*—Teachers throughout the district—throughout the Dominion indeed—wait with much anxiety to see how the Government will fulfil its promise of increased salaries to teachers. Three points, in our opinion, are necessary to the success of the proposed new scale of payments. A living-wage must be given to even uncertificated teachers in the lowest grades; the increase in salaries of the middle grades must be substantial; and, lastly, to provide for slowness and uncertainty of promotion, the principle of increments for length of service must be largely extended, both as to the amount and number of the increments payable. Such a scheme would do much to check the growing unpopularity of teaching as a profession. It would also free the Teachers' Institute from the disagreeable necessity of considering the redress of grievances as the most important plank in its platform and set it free for its more important function, the discussion of educational aims and methods.

*Training of Teachers.*—The usual Saturday classes for the training of teachers were held during the year at Invercargill and Gore. The attendance at the latter centre was, however, so small that it is unlikely it will be retained as a centre in 1914. The following statement sets forth the results of the examination of Southland candidates at the departmental examinations for certificates held in January, 1913: Passed for C, 12; passed for D, 28; gained partial pass for C, 10; gained partial pass for D, 21; passed in five subjects for C, 2; passed in three subjects for C, 5; passed in two subjects for C, 10; passed in one subject for C, 10; partial pass, first section, D (new regulations), 1. These results may, we think, be regarded as very satisfactory. They indicate in the first place that, in a fairly large proportion of cases, our certificated teachers have the laudable ambition of improving their literary status; and, in the second place, that our younger teachers and our uncertificated adult teachers are making reasonable efforts to attain certificated status. The Board during the year, by terminating the engagement of some uncertificated teachers who had not sufficiently exerted themselves in preparation for the certificate examination, took a salutary step, which should serve as a warning to not a few still retained on trial in the service. In a district such as ours the necessity for the establishment of one or two demonstration schools is patent. Accordingly we trust that the representations of the Board to the Department on this subject may have favourable consideration. It is evident that until conditions change very materially there will be need for such institutions, not to take the place of a properly-equipped training college, but to provide for the case of those for whom attendance at a training college is impossible.

*Physical Instruction.*—Classes for the instruction of teachers in the new physical exercises prescribed for the schools of the Dominion by the Department were held at Invercargill and Gore in September and October. No words of praise can be too warm for the heartiness with which the teachers present co-operated with the instructors to make the course an eminently successful one, in face of the fact, too, that they had been called upon to sacrifice a week's holiday for the purpose. The instructors had apparently been happily chosen. Not only did they prove that they knew their work thoroughly in every detail, but they exhibited great sympathy and tact in dealing with their classes. It is exceedingly pleasant to reflect that the new system of physical