

School Committees select from a large number of applicants whose attainments and claims to promotion may be widely dissimilar. With the necessarily limited knowledge of applicants' qualifications and character sometimes afforded by testimonials, it was not to be expected that Committees could easily assume the responsibility of selecting the best teacher for any particular vacancy, and the Board believes that a majority of the School Committees of the district are pleased to be relieved from that obligation. With the right admitted to School Committees by Regulation 3 to forward to the Board any suggestions or recommendations as to the particular vacancy in any school about to be filled, and with the further right of criticizing the Board's selection, which is vested in School Committees by Regulation 8, it is safe to assume that, unless under a combination of circumstances not at all likely to occur, the very best candidate—all things considered—will invariably be selected. The attainment of this purpose it is scarcely necessary to say should be the aim and end of such a set of regulations as has been adopted; and when School Committees fully realise that it is only under regulations calculated to produce such a desirable result that the best interests of the various classes of schools can be most surely conserved, then the Board believes that any slight opposition which may at present exist will entirely disappear.

Under these regulations the Board is of opinion that the following desirable results may be, as nearly as possible, obtained: (1.) Full publicity is given to each vacancy. (2.) Provision is made for School Committees to make known to the Board, before a candidate is selected, any special circumstances relative to the vacant position in their schools about to be filled. (3.) The application of every qualified (certificated) candidate is sent, along with testimonials, to the School Committee for its perusal. (4.) Committees are afforded the opportunity of giving reasons against the Board's proposal to appoint a certain candidate and in favour of any other applicant. (5.) Provision is made whereby, teachers and Committees being agreeable, exchange or transfer of teachers from one district to another may be made.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The revision of the regulations affecting scholarships has occupied the attention of a special committee of the Board appointed for that purpose. Numerous meetings have been held, and a draft set of new regulations prepared for submission to the Board. These involve many changes which materially affect the scholarship system in this district. It is the intention of the Board to consider the proposals of its committee at an early date. The revised regulations, if adopted, cannot now come into operation till the year 1900. On the 31st December last there were on the books of the Board the names of twenty scholarship-holders. Of that number ten names were removed, the period of their respective scholarships having expired. To these young people a sum of £582 10s. was paid during the year, while the expenses of the annual examination amounted to £18 6s. 11d. The annual examination of candidates under existing regulations was held on the 20th December last and following days. In all, seventy-three candidates presented themselves at the various centres—Invercargill, Gore, Riverton—forty-one competing for the scholarships offered to country pupils and thirty-two for those offered to town pupils. The limit of age for candidates for scholarships is fifteen years. Of the seventy-three competitors on this occasion, forty-four were over fourteen years of age, twenty-six over thirteen years and under fourteen, and three were over twelve and under thirteen. Thirty-six candidates obtained at least 60 per cent. of the maximum number of marks, and this result is characterized by the Inspectors as highly satisfactory, and most creditable alike to teachers and pupils concerned, the answers handed in being almost without exception carefully and methodically set out.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—The number of pupil-teachers on the staff at the 31st December was nine boys and forty-four girls, the proportion of the former to the latter being thus as nearly as possible 1 to 5—approximately the same as for several years past. The usual examination was held simultaneously at Invercargill and Queenstown on the 14th June last and following days, when twenty-five candidates presented themselves at the former centre and five at the latter. Of this number, five were presented for Class I. (highest), of whom three passed and two failed; thirteen for Class II., of whom twelve passed and one failed; and five and seven for Classes III. and IV. respectively, who were all successful. At this date—June—there were in all fifty-seven pupil-teachers in the Board's service. The twenty-seven who did not come forward for examination have either completed their apprenticeship or have passed the teachers' E or D examination, which carries with it exemption from further attendance. The Inspectors report that, with the exception of drawing in Class I., the various subjects were handled in a very satisfactory way; and that, in the manner of their execution, the papers were methodical, neat, and tidy.

TECHNICAL CLASSES.—The Saturday carpentry classes for teachers and pupils established in the year 1895 have been successfully carried on for three consecutive sessions, commencing on the 7th May and ending on the 26th November. The attendance was a most decided improvement on that of the previous year, and much intelligent interest in the work was manifested by the students, old and young alike. The roll-number ranged from five to seven for teachers, and from twenty to twenty-two for boys; while the mean average attendance for the three sessions was 5.2 and 19.2 for the senior and junior classes respectively. In the month of May last the following public-school teachers—viz., Messrs. C. W. G. Selby, A. H. Hiddleston, H. P. Young, and T. Gazzard—succeeded in passing the year's practical woodwork examination under the City and Guilds of London Institute. These classes have prosecuted their studies under the superintendence of the Board's architect, assisted this year by Mr. W. L. McLean.

KINDERGARTEN TEACHING.—Acting on the recommendation of a committee appointed to consider the question of kindergarten teaching in the schools of the district, the Board made arrangements with Miss Jane Webber, a trained kindergarten teacher, who had recently arrived in the colony, to give a course of lessons to head-mistresses in its service. Representatives from the most important schools of the district were invited to attend the classes thus established, and a hearty response to the Board's invitation was the result. The Inspectors have expressed to the Board their high appreciation of Miss Webber's ability as a teacher of kindergarten, and their opinion that