

resolution and duly forwarded to the Department. Under the new regulations issued (No. 19), Inspectors are now required to arrange for the examination of all children who are candidates for certificates of competency, or, in other words, who desire to pass their respective standards, whether they attend public schools or not. In view of this regulation, made under the advice and consent of the Government, and so comprehensive in its scope, the Board has instructed its Inspectors to examine, so far as practicable, all private schools on application being made.

APPOINTMENT OF TEACHERS.—The present system of appointing teachers in this district, which has now been in force for some years, continues to work satisfactorily in most respects. After advertising the vacancies as they occur the Board selects not more than six of the best applicants, and, by placing the names in order of merit, indicates to the School Committee which of them is regarded as being most suitable. On several occasions Committees have contented themselves by selecting the candidate last on the list, and it is in this respect that a weakness in the system is revealed. If all the approved candidates were equal in point of attainment and suitability, the selection of any one of them could not be reasonably questioned. But in very few cases can it be said that this equality exists, while it not infrequently happens that a wide difference in attainment, &c., separates the teacher placed first in order of merit from the remaining approved candidates. It will be for the Board to consider whether some alteration should not be made so as to insure in such cases a recognition of the claims of the candidate possessing distinctly superior qualifications. No stronger proof of the Board's consistency in advertising vacancies can be given than is shown by the fact that in one case only (that of Christchurch West) has the Board departed from its rule. The special circumstances of this case, arising out of the introduction of the colonial scale of staffs, were such as to fully warrant the Board in acting upon the School Committee's recommendation.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—At the annual examination for the Board's scholarships, held during the week commencing the 14th December, there were 57 candidates for the scholarships of the junior class (36 boys and 21 girls), and 13 for the senior scholarships (6 boys and 7 girls). As compared with previous years, in both divisions there has been a marked decrease in the number of entries. So far as the junior class is concerned this falling-off may be attributed in some measure to the establishment of district high schools where parents can now obtain for their children secondary instruction; but the diminution in the number of senior candidates cannot be so readily explained, seeing that these candidates are chiefly drawn from previous scholarship-winners who have not been affected by the facilities offered in connection with district high schools. Of the 57 junior candidates, 33 came from town schools, 14 from schools having two certificated teachers, and 10 from sole-charge schools. The town candidates secured six of the twelve scholarships, while the remaining six fell to candidates from schools of the second class, the six months' advantage as regards age, which under the present regulations they may claim, being required by three of these candidates. None of the candidates sent up from sole-charge schools succeeded in securing a scholarship, notwithstanding the full year's advantage allowed in their case. A noticeable feature in connection with the examination is the low percentage of marks gained by the candidates generally. Out of a possible total of 650 the candidate highest on the list secured 395 marks, while the twelfth candidate obtained 325 only; none of the remaining candidates qualified. Assuming that the standard of examination was no higher than usual it is evident that the candidates generally were not so well prepared to meet the tests of examination as those competing in previous years have been. For the two Gammack Scholarships offered by the Board there were seven candidates.

Early in January of this year the Department held a National Scholarships Examination, the results of which, so far as concerns this district, will be duly recorded in the Board's next annual report.

IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE.—Generally speaking, parents are now more ready than formerly to assist the Board's officer in carrying out the provisions of the School Attendance Act. The prevalence of sickness has been a marked feature during the year, making it impracticable to enforce attendance in all cases. During the year there were 1,753 children reported for irregular attendance, but in 132 cases only (as against 324 in the year 1902) was it necessary to issue summonses, the fullest inquiries having first been made in order to avoid undue severity. The amount of fines imposed also show a substantial reduction, being £17 16s., as compared with £36 5s. 6d. during the previous year.

PUBLIC-SCHOOL TEACHERS' SALARIES ACT.—During the year payment of teachers' salaries has continued in accordance with the new Act, in respect of which the regulations issued by the Department from time to time appear to have very fairly met with the conditions arising out of fluctuating attendance and epidemics among the children. At the close of the year, acting in unison with the Department's requirements, the staffs at the Ashburton and St. Albans Main and Side Schools were brought into line with the provisions of Part III. of the Act, in each case the average attendance at the main school and the side school being added together for the purpose of computing the staff and salaries. In order to effect this arrangement, it was found necessary to withdraw Standard III. from the side schools, where for the future instruction will be confined to the preparatory classes and Standards I. and II.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.—The technical classes at Christchurch, Ashburton, Lyttelton, Rangiora, and Leeston have continued in operation during the year, the subjects of instruction finding most favour being woodwork and cookery; though towards the close of the year signs were not wanting that dressmaking would in future be also taken up at most centres. At Leeston, in addition to woodwork, instruction in ironwork had been carried on throughout the year. The teachers' handwork and woodwork classes, held at the Normal School, have been well attended. The Christchurch School of Domestic Instruction has continued to give instruction in cookery to a number of large classes from the Board's schools. During the year 1903 developments promised in connection with technical instruction, owing to the establishment of the Christchurch Technical Classes Association, have taken definite shape, resulting in the successful formation and carrying-on of a large number of technical and continuation classes by the association, to which body much credit is due for the steps taken to afford youths of either sex an opportunity of making themselves better acquainted with the principles underlying their respective trades or occupations.