

TRAINING COLLEGE.—Of those who have completed their apprenticeship, and in order to further qualify themselves for efficient service, no fewer than sixteen pupil-teachers and probationers from this district have applied for (and been granted) entrance to the Otago Teachers' Training College, and it is largely to these that the Board has to look for the supply of fully trained teachers in the years to come.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—Under this heading there is little unusual to report. The annual examination of candidates conducted by the Department, and supervised by the Board's officials, was held as usual in the beginning of December. At this examination ninety-seven candidates (sixty-four for the Junior and thirty-three for the Senior Scholarships) presented themselves. Of the Junior candidates, thirty-eight succeeded in qualifying themselves by gaining the minimum number of marks. In terms of the Department's regulations, the Board first awarded Junior National Scholarships of the value of £10. To the value of the scholarship first mentioned was added a sum of £30 as boarding-allowance, in terms of section 75 of the Education Act, the successful candidate having to reside away from home while attending the high school at which the scholarship was made tenable. To those next highest on the list the Board then allotted six scholarships of the value of £30, and twelve scholarships of the value of £5, tenable for two years. To the Senior candidates two scholarships of the value of £30 and one scholarship of the value of £5, tenable for three years, were awarded. From the results above summarized it is evident that a considerable minority of the candidates, in fairness to themselves and the schools they represented, should not have presented themselves for this examination, the marks obtained not being considered sufficient to establish a claim even to admission to a free place in the high schools.

INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS.—With reference to the subject of the inspection and examination of the schools of the district, and the practical results of the operation of our education system generally, the Board refers those interested to the exhaustive report furnished by its Inspectors.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL.—The report of the Board's Director of Technical Instruction furnishes all necessary information with respect to the extension and progress of manual and technical education throughout the district. It is therefore not required to do more than direct the attention of those who may be interested in this subject to Mr. McCaw's exhaustive report and tabulated results of the year's operations.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—Acting in conjunction with the Governors of the Southland High Schools, the Board has continued the arrangement under which the partial services of a physical instructor have been made available for the schools under its control. Mr. I. G. Galloway, as in past years, has, so far as is practicable, continued to attend to this department of our educational curriculum. Visits are paid at stated intervals to schools in and around all the principal centres of population, and on these occasions instruction is given in which pupils and teachers alike participate. The instructor also takes note of the progress made since his previous visit in carrying into practice the programme of physical exercises prescribed by the Board's regulations. The Board has reason to believe that good work is being done in this subject in most schools throughout the district.

APPOINTMENT OF TEACHERS.—School Committees within the bounds of the education district in a very large majority of cases continue to exercise an intelligent and helpful interest in all matters pertaining to their respective schools. Subject to very moderate and reasonable limitations by the Boards, the School Committees have now been practically endowed with the power of appointing their own teachers.

CAPITATION GRANTS.—School Committees have this year a very substantial grievance against the Department in the matter of the withdrawal of the special grant of 9d. per unit of average attendance paid during some years past. These grants should either never have been made at all, or, unless under very exceptional circumstances indeed, they should be continued. Boards have been accused of abusing the trust reposed in them as agents for this distribution of the Government's bounty by proportionally reducing the amounts paid to the School Committees in their districts for incidental expenses. This Board desires it to be known that no reduction whatever was made in its scale of contributions to School Committees throughout this district in consequence of this special capitation paid direct by the Department. Indeed, on the contrary, the Board has undertaken during recent years a much larger share in the responsibility of the maintenance of school buildings in an efficient state of repair, such works being now largely carried out by an efficient staff of workmen operating under the control of its architect, and according to a regular plan of rotation.

FREE SCHOOL TEXT-BOOKS.—The Board accepted the proposals of the Government for the supply of free text-books to Standards I and II and preparatory classes, but is not prepared to acknowledge that this innovation is in any sense justified. So far as the Southland District is concerned, the Board is not aware that such a concession was asked for or required; and, although the books have been supplied to all schools accepting the Government's offer, the Board is aware that many parents prefer to purchase the books required by their children in preference to allowing them to make use of books which are the common property of all the pupils in attendance. There is also the difficulty of determining whether the pupils shall or shall not be permitted to take the books to their homes: the matter has, in this district, been left to the discretion of the teachers. If the books are kept in the school, how are the home lessons to be prepared? If they are allowed to be taken home, the wear and tear is such that a new set of books will certainly be required for each successive year, and this contingency, by the conditions of the grant, does not seem to have been anticipated. The Board is of opinion that the money spent in the purchase of text-books could assuredly be applied to some more useful and necessary purpose.