

TEACHERS AND PUPIL-TEACHERS.—In the Board's service at the end of the year there were 265 teachers, showing an increase of twenty-five over the previous year's returns. This increase is accounted for by the appointment of extra assistants (principally mistresses) under the Public-School Teachers' Salaries Act. In the year 1895 the percentage of male to female pupil-teachers in the district was as 13·3 to 86·6. The Board for the past few years has strenuously endeavoured to counteract this tendency for the education of the district to pass almost entirely into the hands of females; and, whenever practicable, has encouraged the employment of suitable boys. The numbers now in the service show that the percentage of the sexes is as 31 to 69, in other words, the proportion of boys in the ranks of pupil-teachers has more than doubled during the past seven years. When the low rate of salary offered to male pupil-teachers is taken into account, it is doubtful whether the supply will continue to be equal to the demand.

The usual annual examination of pupil-teachers was held in the month of June last, when 23 candidates were present. Of these, 5 were examined in the first class, 9 in the second, 4 in the third, and 5 in the fourth. Six candidates failed—1 in the first class, 2 in the second, 1 in the third, and 2 in the fourth.

All the other pupil-teachers in the service were for sufficient reasons—chiefly on the ground of having passed a superior examination—exempted from attendance, no less than thirteen being matriculated students of the New Zealand University. The Inspectors report that the work was varied in character, ranging from poor to good, and that the papers handed in by the candidates were good in form, being neatly written and methodically arranged.

SALARIES OF TEACHERS.—Under the colonial scale of staffs and salaries, the teachers of this district have on the whole greatly benefited. A substantial advantage has been gained by (1) those in charge of the larger schools, (2) by the teachers of schools with an average attendance below twenty; and (3) generally by all female teachers in charge of schools; while the male teachers of schools with an average from twenty to thirty and the male assistants in the largest schools have (or will have, after the close of the year 1903) suffered considerable reduction of income. Should any revision or modification of the scale of payments be resolved on, the Board trusts that the claims of the last-mentioned classes of teachers will not be overlooked. Speaking generally it may be said that, exclusive of the payment in respect of new appointments under the Public-School Teachers' Salaries Act, the salaries of teachers in this district have benefited to the extent of probably £1,500 per annum by the adoption of the new scale. It is, perhaps, yet too soon to hazard a definite opinion as to the probable effects of the colonialisation of payments of salaries to such a large and important section of the State workers, but it is quite safe to say that the payment approximately of equal salary for equal work and responsibility all over the colony is in itself not only just and equitable, but conducive to the general advancement of the best interests of education.

One effect of the employment of so many extra teachers under the new system has been to absorb all the surplus talent available; and, indeed, to create a demand which can only at present be satisfied by the temporary appointment of partially certificated or altogether uncertificated persons to fill the smaller vacancies. It is probable that, for the less remunerative positions, the services of fully qualified teachers will not be available for some years to come. It is satisfactory to learn that some of the defects of the new Act have already been removed. Provision has been made by the Department for the payment of relieving-teachers in the place of those absent from duty on sick-leave; and this Board is particularly gratified to note by the issue of recent regulations under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act that provision has also been made for the instruction of all girls in sewing.

TRAINING OF TEACHERS.—The Board in its last report acknowledged receipt from the Government of a special grant of £150 for the training of its teaching staff in the various departments of kindergarten, manual, and technical work. This year a similar vote for this purpose was placed at the Board's disposal. Special Saturday classes for the instruction of teachers in these subjects were held in Invercargill and Gore throughout the year. To enable students from all parts of the district accessible to the railway system to attend, free passes were issued. A large majority of the Board's staff of teachers took advantage of the concession offered of gaining some practical knowledge of the various subjects above enumerated—a knowledge that, judging by the spirit of the times, seems now to be an indispensable adjunct to the teacher's stock in trade. The fact that so many of the Board's staff of teachers are willing, and indeed in many cases anxious, to sacrifice their statutory weekly holiday to equip themselves more fully for their life's work speaks volumes for their earnestness and enthusiasm.

The balance at the close of 1901 to the credit of the Teachers' Training Account was £91 18s. 8d. Allowing for receipts and expenditure during 1902, and the deduction of the sum voted for administration expenses as allowed by the Department, the credit balance on the 31st December was £95 1s. 10d., for the judicious expenditure of which due provision will be made during the now current year.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The second annual examination for scholarships under the new regulations was held in December. In all 56 candidates presented themselves, 7 for extension of scholarships held till the end of the year, and 49 for ordinary scholarships. Of the latter 18 were girls and 31 boys; while of the candidates for extension 1 was a girl, the others were boys. All of the seniors and twenty-four of the juniors made over 60 per cent. of the possible number of marks, and the Inspectors report that much of the work done by the majority of the candidates was excellent, and that the general results of the examination were very good indeed.