

Advocates of examination into novelty will doubtless regard the step as one in the right direction, but it appears to me that the benefits to be derived from such a system are not likely to justify its cost, so far, at least, as this colony is concerned.

Although this office is not required to examine into novelty, it has power to reject applications for inventions which are not new, and in many doubtful cases the records are carefully gone through to see whether the invention has not been already patented.

Applicants and their agents are, as a rule, quite willing to insert any references to former inventions the office considers desirable, and this, after all, appears to be the end sought to be obtained by the English amendment.

The Australian Commonwealth Patents Act is now in operation, and as it is of considerable interest to New Zealand inventors, I shall briefly refer to its principal provisions. The Act, while resembling the law of the United Kingdom and of this colony in certain respects, differs in some important particulars. Provisional protection is obtainable, and a patent for an improvement on an invention, called "an additional patent," may be granted for the unexpired term of the original patent. An examination is to be made to ascertain whether the invention has been previously patented, but a patent application or description of an invention published more than fifty years before the application for a patent under the new Act is not a bar to the granting of such application, unless it is shown that the prior invention has been used in Australia within the fifty years preceding the date of such application. The Commissioner has more extended powers than the Comptroller-General in England, and may, subject to appeal, refuse to grant a patent if not satisfied as to novelty, or require the insertion of a reference to any former invention.

The fees for the full term amount to £13, £5 less than the total amount in this colony. Provision is made for the conversion of State patents into Commonwealth patents, as well as for opposition, amendments, compulsory licenses, &c. The Act also provides for the application of section 103 of the Imperial Act to the Commonwealth, and it is hoped that the necessary arrangements will shortly be made by which residents of this colony and other places may be enabled to obtain priority in the filing of applications there in accordance with the International Convention.

DESIGNS.

Thirty-one applications were received for the registration of designs, 1 more than last year; and 26 designs were registered—6 in Class 1 (articles composed wholly or partly of metal), 8 in Class 2 (jewellery), 3 in Class 3 (articles composed wholly or partly of wood, bone, ivory, *papier-maché*, or other solid substances), 7 in Class 5 (articles composed wholly or partly of paper), 1 in Class 10 (millinery and wearing-apparel, including boots and shoes), and 1 in Class 13 (printed or woven designs on textile piece goods).

The fees received under this head amounted to £16. Last year the amount paid was £15.

TRADE MARKS.

The number of applications for the registration of trade marks during the year amounted to 447, as compared with 412 applications in the previous year; and 382 marks were registered, 46 more than in the previous year. The total fees received in respect of trade marks amounted to £1,287 15s. 8d.; £528 13s. 6d. was received in 1902, and the increase for the year is therefore £759 2s. 2d. During the year the fees became due on all trade marks registered before the commencement of the present Act on the 1st January, 1890, and this accounts, as I have already pointed out, for the payment of £671. As these marks will now remain in force without further payment for another fourteen years, the renewal fees in future will, as a rule, be only payable on the marks registered fourteen years ago under the present Act, and the amount paid in this respect will not, of course, be nearly so great for some time to come. I may add that of 1,222 marks registered before 1890 the fees were paid in 717 cases, and the remaining 505 marks have accordingly been struck off the Register. The assignments registered showed a considerable increase, £60 16s. being received in fees from this source, as compared with £25 10s. in 1902; and 194 searches were recorded, 78 more than in 1902. The other receipts are all slightly in excess of last year's, but none call for special comment.

GOODS FOR WHICH MARKS REGISTERED.

As usual, the greatest number of marks have been registered in Class 42, "Substances used as food," *i.e.* 86, 11 less than last year; 49 were registered in the next largest class, "Medicines," 3 more than in the preceding year; 37 in Class 45, "Tobacco," as compared with 24 in 1902; and 31 in Class 47, "Soap, candles, &c.," 6 more than in 1902. The number of applications in the various classes is tabulated in the Schedule.

COUNTRIES FROM WHICH APPLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Two hundred and nineteen applications for registration of trade marks were received from residents in the colony, 21 more than in the preceding year; 128 from the United Kingdom, 4 more than in 1902; 40 from the United States, as compared with 51 in 1902; and 51 from the Australian Commonwealth, a falling-off of 9 as compared with the number received in the previous year.

OPPOSED CASES.

Notice of opposition was lodged in nine cases, and in one case notice of appeal was given.