

Certificates.

Board.		Catholic.		Private.		High Schools.		Totals.	
Pro-ficiency.	Com-petency.	Pro-ficiency.	Com-petency.	Pro-ficiency.	Com-petency.	Pro-ficiency.	Com-petency.	Pro-ficiency.	Com-petency.
490	132	28	24	7	0	15	6	540	162

A reference to the table shows that the number of pupils classed in Standard VII has fallen off considerably, but this is accounted for by the fact that a high school was opened in Gisborne at the beginning of the year, and the district high school in which pupils were classed as belonging to Standard VII ceased to exist as such. The increase in the number of pupils in Standards VI, V, and IV is satisfactory, the proportion of pupils in these classes being higher than for several years past. The numbers in the lower classes continue somewhat large, but we do not think that this is a cause for regret. The proportion is higher in the Catholic and private schools, but the same attention is not given to the juniors as in the Board schools. The forcing of the children from the lower classes at too early an age is a great mistake, for thoroughness in the elementary work is the sure road to success in the higher classes. The preparatory classes number 37 per cent. of the total school attendance, which is nearly 2 per cent. lower than for the year 1908. In the classification of the children, we think the teachers exercise fair judgment. It is seldom found necessary in the larger schools to call in question a teacher's classification, and in the small schools it is possible to exercise a proper control in the case of young and inexperienced teachers. There is a danger, however, in the present freedom of classification. Attention has been directed to the fact of a teacher so classifying a pupil as to make it possible for him to be in Standard V, although incapable of doing the work of the Fourth Standard. This might enable a lad to leave school as a Standard V pupil, but without a competency certificate. There appears to be no hindrance to children leaving school in this way, and being employed as errand-boys or milk-supply boys.

Between the Fourth and Sixth Standards a serious leakage takes place, and something ought to be done to discover the cause. For example, in the above tabulation, 1,120 pupils in Standard IV are represented by 633 pupils in Standard VI, a difference of 44 per cent., and what becomes of them can only be inferred. It should be made illegal for anyone to employ either a boy or a girl who does not hold a certificate of competency of the Fifth or a higher standard. The present leakage in the upper standards must be stayed, and the leaving standard still further raised, if the Dominion is to experience the full benefits of its education system.

The pupils who entered for the examination for the Standard VI proficiency certificates numbered 633, but eleven were absent from examination, so that 622 pupils (exclusive of Catholics, private, and high school pupils) took the special papers for the completion of their final tests. As in previous years, the examination was carried on in different centres under duly appointed supervisors in the same way as that for the National Scholarships. The date of examination was made as late as possible, so as to encourage attendance at school to the time of breaking up. The plan is a good one, for the attendance and regularity at school during the December quarter were the best of the whole year. When the school examinations took place at irregular intervals many pupils were kept at home from the time of the annual visit up to the Christmas holidays, and the December returns were the lowest for the year. Since the new plan was adopted the December quarterly attendance has become the best, and although the average regularity for the year was 88.5 per cent of the average roll, the average regularity for the December quarter was 88.9 per cent. The number of candidates presenting themselves for examination and the number of proficiency and competency certificates gained in the several classes of schools are given in the table dealing with the pupils belonging to the Board schools.

PUPIL-TEACHERS AND PROBATIONERS.—The changes that have been made in the employment of pupil-teachers and probationers have brought into prominence several matters that are likely to have an important effect upon the efficiency of the schools. Young persons who have matriculated are entitled to appointment as third-year pupil-teachers, and probationers who qualify in the Junior Civil Service Examination are entitled to admission to a training college should they matriculate during their engagement as probationers. Neither for the Junior Civil Service Examination nor for the Matriculation is there a reading or recitation test required. It need hardly be stated how important is reading in the case of young teachers; and seeing that the examination for pupil-teachers by the Department omits the subject altogether, we think the Board's regulations should be amended so as to provide instruction in reading for pupil-teachers and probationers. One of the chief defects in the schools to-day is the indifferent reading, followed by the slovenly forms of speaking that are allowed to pass current in the playground. Probationers should be trained to realize in reading and recitation the value of clear, distinct enunciation, of due attention to stops, and the correct modulation of the voice, for if these qualities are inculcated among those who have to teach others it is likely that an improvement will soon take place in the case of the children. The present system has certainly lowered the teaching qualities of candidates. In the old days pupil-teachers were really trained, but now nothing is done for them, as they are no sooner engaged than they are off to "college." If the pupil-teachers are to be retained as part of the education system, the four-years period is not too long for this preparation, but if their abolition is contemplated, the sooner this event takes place the better for the schools and education generally.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL.—The appointment of a specialist to give instruction in elementary agriculture and dairying is an important event in the history of manual and technical instruction in