

The percentage of uncertificated teachers in the Board's service shows a gradual decrease in each successive year, and the supply of duly-qualified candidates for appointments of the medium or higher class is now fully in excess of the demand. Only in places where the attendance is small and uncertain, and the salary payable in consequence but a very meagre one, is it now necessary to appoint teachers who do not possess either a full certificate of competency or a "license to teach," which latter during the period for which it is issued has, by the department's regulations, the force of an ordinary certificate. The appointment of uncertificated teachers, when made, is only of a temporary nature, and in such cases the person so employed is expected to exercise all due diligence in securing classification as a fully-qualified teacher. Notwithstanding this rule of the Board, there are a few in its service who have made no apparent effort to prepare for or pass the prescribed examination. This is an irregularity that the Board cannot allow to continue, especially in the case of schools where the attendance warrants the payment of a moderate salary.

There is an anomaly at present in existence with reference to the status of persons who have passed the teachers' examination, but who, owing to their youth or lack of the necessary two years' experience in teaching, are not entitled to the possession of a certificate, the issue of which in part depends on age and experience. The former may be attained by exercising the virtue of patience, but the regulations make no provision for securing the latter, unless, indeed, the candidate has had the privilege of serving some Board in the capacity of pupil-teacher. This Board is of opinion that an interim certificate should be issued to all who pass the prescribed literary examination, such certificate to entitle the holder to all the privileges of the holder of a "license to teach" for such a period as would give an opportunity to gain Inspector's marks and attain to the minimum age at which candidates may secure full classification.

PUPIL-TEACHERS' EXAMINATION.—The usual examination of pupil-teachers was held in June last. Owing to an important alteration in the new regulations respecting pupil-teachers, adopted by the Board in 1889, whereby they are required to present themselves for examination at the end instead of the commencement of the pupil-teacher year, a general exemption from attendance at this year's examination was granted to all those who were successful at the previous examination, held in June, 1889. In consequence of this resolve, only three candidates (those who had failed to satisfy the Inspector's requirements for a pass in the previous year) presented themselves. Of these, two were successful; the other again failed, and has since left the Board's service, as required by the regulations.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—At this year's examination, held in June, twenty-two candidates (ten resident and twelve non-resident) presented themselves. Five scholarships tenable for three years were awarded—two, of the annual value of £20, to resident candidates, and three, of £35 each, to non-resident candidates. In addition to the foregoing, four extra scholarships of £20 each, but tenable for one year only, were awarded to the most meritorious of the unsuccessful candidates.

At the Board's request, reports are furnished at the end of each school-term by the Rector of the Southland High Schools, at which institution holders are required to attend during the currency of their scholarships. These reports have given ample and satisfactory evidence concerning the attendance, diligence, and progress of scholarship pupils, and past experience has shown that they are well able to secure and maintain honourable positions in the secondary school, their work generally being of more than average merit. It is worthy of mention that scholarships under this Board are of one class as regards attainments and age, and are open to all children in the Southland Education District, whether attending the public schools or not. The scholarships now current number seventeen. The sum paid during 1890 to the holders of scholarships amounted to £462 10s., and this amount, together with a sum of £16 1s., expenses incurred in advertising and conducting the examination, represents the total grant received from the Government for scholarships during the year—viz., £478 10s.

SCHOOL-BUILDINGS.—Departmental Return No. 7 shows in detail the amounts expended in the erection of new buildings and the maintenance of existing ones during the year just ended. To apportion equitably the annual Government grant for building purposes becomes year by year an increasingly difficult problem to solve, and this because of the inadequacy of the sum granted. In this district it would be simply impossible to satisfy the urgent and just claims of School Committees for repairs, additions, and the erection of new buildings, without some extraneous assistance. The Board is therefore compelled to economize in its administration of the Maintenance Fund, and from the credit balance thus created appropriate considerable sums to augment the Building Fund, and so make it serve the purpose for which it is intended. The Board is very strongly of opinion that such an amount should year by year be set apart for building operations as would in a reasonable way meet the necessities of the several Boards throughout the colony, and leave the Maintenance Fund to be devoted entirely to carrying out its legitimate purposes.

The amount expended during the year in the erection of new buildings, repairs and improvements to those already erected, and the purchase of furniture and appliances, was £1,997 17s. 6d. Of this sum, £1,035 9s. 10d. was expended in the erection of new buildings in various districts. In districts such as Southland, where, for obvious reasons, all the buildings, with perhaps three or four exceptions, are of wood, it will be evident that a large annual expenditure for painting alone is an absolute necessity if the Board's properties are to be preserved from premature decay. There are at present 189 separate buildings (schools and residences) in the district, each requiring to be repainted once in every four or five years at least. At the moderate computation of, say, £8 for each building, it will be seen that to do justice to the property under its charge an annually-recurring expenditure of from £300 to £400 is required for this work alone.

Owing to an alteration of the date when the accounts of School Committees are this year to be made up, it is not possible to indicate precisely to what extent the Board's expenditure, as above detailed, has been supplemented by contributions from the several school districts. It may safely be predicted, however, that a perusal of the abstracts of accounts, when rendered, will supply information of a satisfactory nature.