

such as cookery, dressmaking, and woodwork. During the year the Amberley centre was reopened, and is now in active operation. The reports received from the several associations and technical committees are printed in another paper, from which a general estimate of the work accomplished may be formed. From Mr. Howell's report on the Board's school classes it will be seen that the total average attendance for both boys and girls for the year 1908 was 1,268, as against 1,203 in the previous year, and that the financial statement indicates a satisfactory balance on the year's working. In addition to cookery, the girls will now receive instruction in laundry-work, a subject of no little importance to those who later on in life will probably be engaged in domestic duties. The Board feels that its Director is to be congratulated on the good results secured, to which the loyal support given by headmasters has contributed in no small degree. In sixty of the Board's schools recognised handwork classes, consisting mainly of brush drawing and modelling (both plasticine and carton) have been carried on. The continuity of the Board's work in agriculture and nature-study has been somewhat broken by the retirement of the instructor, Mr. G. Rennie, whose resignation took effect at the end of August, 1908. The Board has placed on record its appreciation of the valuable services rendered by Mr. Rennie in doing pioneer work in connection with the school-garden movement and the teaching of elementary agriculture. The Board has been able to secure the part-time services of Mr. E. Wilkinson as supervisor of school-gardens, so that in this branch of the work further progress has been made. During the year negotiations were opened up with the Board of Managers of the Christchurch Technical Classes, with the view of the joint appointment of an instructor having the necessary scientific attainment and an intimate knowledge of practical agriculture. There were, however, difficulties in the way which led to a temporary postponement of the matter.

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.—During the year the secondary department at the Kaikoura District High School has been reopened, the number of pupils in readiness to attend, and the general support promised by the residents, warranting such a course. Against this, however, the Board regrets having to report a serious falling off in the attendance at the Amberley and Darfield District High Schools. From the former the services of the special assistant were withdrawn at the end of the year, and a similar course has since been decided upon as regards Darfield. The chief reason for this reduced attendance is owing to the facilities now given for holders of proficiency certificates to attend the secondary and technical schools in the larger centres. There may be other contributing causes, such as the lack of interest on the part of parents, on some of whom, apparently, nothing short of compulsion would have any effect. The secondary department at Christchurch West, though showing a smaller average attendance for the year, is in reality holding its own, the temporary loss being almost entirely due to the new regulations for the examination of the Sixth Standards, which this year stopped the influx of new pupils until after the summer vacation.

NATIVE SCHOOLS.—During the year the Department brought under the Board's notice the question of the position of the Native schools at Tuahiwi, Little River, and Rapaki, and suggested that it would be to the general interests if they should be taken over by the Board. After some consideration, which was the more necessary owing to the conditions under which the schools had been previously carried on, the Board agreed to take them over as from the 1st July, 1908.

FREE SCHOOL BOOKS.—Towards the close of the year the Department intimated that a grant would be made early in 1909 for the purchase of certain school books for children in classes up to and including Standard II. While agreeing to accept the grant on the conditions stipulated, the Board expressed the opinion that the money could be much better spent on the purchase of such essential school requisites as parents at present have to obtain, a view very generally shared by others interested in education. In the opinion of the Board there has been no generally expressed wish that parents should be relieved of the privilege of purchasing the books used by their own children.

INSPECTION.—In order to carry out the regulations issued by the Department, it has been necessary for the Inspectors to hold special examinations of pupils in Standard VI, for which purpose the examination centres have been made as numerous as the circumstances would permit. To carry out this arrangement, as well as to cope with the increase in the ordinary work of inspection and examination, the Board has been obliged to appoint a fourth Inspector. Mr. W. Brock, M.A., an experienced teacher of many years' standing, who was selected for the position, took up his new duties on the 18th July, 1908. In reference to the formalities imposed by the regulations for the inspection and examination of schools, the Board regrets that the parent of any candidate for a certificate of proficiency, or the candidate himself, is required to give written notice to that effect. Inasmuch as during the year the preparation of the pupils in Standard VI is with the special view of securing such certificates, the Board is of opinion that the written notice is entirely unnecessary, and calculated to place obstacles in the way of these certificates being obtained. The Board is also of opinion that the regulation requiring written notice to be given in the case of candidates for competency certificates has resulted in a large number of children leaving the public schools without the certificate to which their attainments have entitled them, a matter which will give rise to much inconvenience in the future.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.—In consequence of inquiries made in regard to the imparting of religious instruction, and finding that some Committees had lessened the number of school hours, the Board has issued a general regulation fixing five hours each day during five days each week as the ordinary hours of instruction for all the standard classes, the hours for the preparatory classes not to exceed four if the Committee should so direct. The Board is glad at all times to hear of teaching of a religious character being given so long as it takes place before the opening of school in the morning or after the time of closing; and it knows that Committees generally are willing to give every facility in order that such arrangement may be made.

APPOINTMENT OF TEACHERS AND COUNTRY SERVICE.—During the year the Inspectors drew attention to the dearth of candidates for some positions, and to the complete absence in others, and submitted that the time was ripe to introduce a system which would secure to rural schools a fair share of that teaching power which country residents are taxed to provide. As the outcome