

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHRISTCHURCH TECHNICAL COLLEGE.

The technical day-school was opened in July, 1907, and has therefore been in existence for two years and a half. Since it is of a type new in the Dominion, and possesses certain peculiar features, it will be of interest to place on record such facts as will show how far it has met a need. It was felt that in a centre of population like Christchurch there were, in sufficient numbers to justify a school of this type, boys and girls who could only give one or two or three years to their further education during the daytime after leaving the primary school, and who would therefore need a curriculum that would, even in this short time, give them a sound preliminary training for the work which they intended to take up in after-life. For such the curriculum of the ordinary secondary school is admittedly unsuited, since it is arranged with a view to a minimum school period of three years, and a maximum of from five to seven years. It was thought by some that the opening of a school such as this would seriously affect the secondary schools already in existence; but the fact that during the two years and a half of its existence no less than 316 pupils have attended the school, and that during the same period no marked decrease in the numbers attending any of the secondary schools of other types has taken place, is sufficient to show that the expectations of the Board have been amply realized, and that the school is filling a gap in the educational system of Christchurch and district. The school provides four courses of instruction, as follows: An agricultural course for intending farmers; an industrial course for boys who intend to enter one or other of the skilled trades; a domestic-science course for girls who wish to prepare themselves for the work of the home; a commercial course for boys and girls who propose to take up office-work. As each course is intended to provide a sound basis of education, there is no hard and fast line between them. English forms an important part of each. All girls, whatever they may be taking up, are required to give not less than four hours a week to domestic science, including cookery, needlework, and hygiene or elementary science of common life; and similarly all boys are given an opportunity of acquiring that accurate co-ordination between hand and eye that a suitable course in woodwork or metal-work affords.

The commercial course was taken by 96 students in 1908, and by 110 in 1909; the domestic course by 23 students in 1908 and by 40 in 1909; the industrial course by 33 students in 1908 and by 50 in 1909; and the agricultural course by 11 students in 1908 and by 21 in 1909. The total number of students for 1908 was 163, and for 1909 221.

It will be of interest to note how many of the pupils remain for more than one year, and how many for more than two years. Of those who joined in 1907, 85 per cent. remained at the school during 1908, while of those who joined in 1908, 66 per cent. remained during the present year. The high percentage of second-year pupils during 1908 is, no doubt, due to the fact that the school started in July, 1907, and accordingly the session for that year was barely six months. Of those who joined in 1907, 33 per cent. have been with us during the present year. These figures are, I think, distinctly encouraging. They show that, while the pupils are for the most part unable to remain long at school, nevertheless only about one-third leave after the first year, and about one-third remain for a third year. With these conditions the school should do and is doing sound educational work. That this is so, we have received striking testimony from outside. During the past year, acting under instructions from the Board, I addressed the following inquiries to employers who had former pupils in their employ: (1.) Have you found this employee steady and trustworthy? (2.) Is he generally adaptable and willing to learn? (3.) Do you find the special training which he received here to be of any value in your business? With only one exception, and that readily explicable, the replies were uniformly favourable, and in some cases most heartily so. The same evidence is afforded by our evening classes, for the students who have been in our day-school generally show that they are easily able to outdistance other students of the same standing. There is one feature of our work that should not be passed over: During 1907 representations were made by some country parents as to the desirability of establishing short courses of three days a week for country pupils who either could not be spared from the work of the farm or home for longer, or who would find the long train journey every day too great a tax. Short courses were accordingly arranged, and they have proved an undoubted benefit to not an inconsiderable number of pupils. During the present term a lending library in connection with the day-school has been founded, the nucleus being provided by donations from the pupils themselves, assisted by a generous grant from the Board of Managers. In the future this library should do much towards cultivating the taste of our pupils for good and healthy literature—one of the greatest benefits that any school can bestow. The school curriculum has kept in view the fact that one of the most important factors in the education of girls is physical culture. Regular instruction has been given in breathing-exercises, marching, dumb-bells, and Indian clubs, with the result of a marked improvement in the general physique and health of the girls. There has also been a keen interest taken in the sports, which have included hockey and basket-ball in the winter, and cricket and tennis in the summer terms. Matches have been played with teams from other schools and local clubs. The sports have done much in fostering a spirit of good-comradeship and healthy emulation among the girls, and in furthering the development of "a sound mind in a sound body." With the boys hockey has been the favourite winter game, though football has found a fair number of adherents. In the summer months cricket has exclusively occupied their attention. Throughout the year swimming classes have been held once a week at the Christchurch Tepid Baths, and have been attended by over forty pupils, with very satisfactory results.

The discipline of the school is excellent. Much to the credit of my colleagues, and no little to the credit of the boys—perhaps I should add to that of the girls also, for their influence may have had something to do with the matter—the cane has never once been found necessary, and not only so, but detention, that bugbear of the teacher and terror of the slow or stupid child, is comparatively rarely used. Yet in spite of the absence of these deterrents the order of the school is very good. I have had a fairly wide experience of schools, but I have never known a school where the discipline was better or where