

TARANAKI.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

Some form of handwork has been taken up by the majority of the schools in the district. In addition to the ordinary handwork subjects, manual subjects were recognized by the Department in 159 cases, the subjects of instruction, with one or two exceptions, being the same as taken up in previous years.

The advantages of the rural course at the Stratford District High School are becoming more widely recognized and appreciated by the parents of the district. It is now admitted by those competent to judge that the instruction provided is educational in the strict meaning of the term, and also utilitarian. The teaching of such subjects as physics, chemistry, dairying and agriculture lends itself to the adoption of the most modern methods, and the useful nature of the knowledge inculcated has been proved to be of service on the farm. One serious objection that parents advanced against this scheme—viz., the disadvantages under which intending candidates for the Public Service Junior Examination laboured—has now disappeared. Scholars taking the rural course have been prepared during the past year for this examination, and the percentage of passes has been very gratifying indeed.

In the past the duration of the course in this branch of education has been two years. The consequence has been that at the completion of the two years rural students, finding that no provision was made for more advanced work in the subjects of this course, and also discovering that the passing of Matriculation and Public Service Senior in the ordinary subjects was an impossibility, left the school.

An extension of the rural course is necessary so that pupils can advance in the subjects of the course to the standard required by the Public Service Senior Examination. The problem of arranging this extension is intimately connected with the staffing of the schools, and is very difficult of solution, at least as far as district high schools are concerned, whose staffs are limited by regulation. The extension, however, will, if ever arranged, be of great benefit not only in lengthening the school life of many secondary students, but also in still further developing that mode of acquiring knowledge which has proved so successful during its first two years.

During the past year a week was devoted to the more technical side of the various subjects, and in this time valuable assistance was rendered by Dr. T. L. Paget, who gave a short course of lectures in hygiene; Mr. W. Kirkman, who instructed the students in the technique of dairying; and by Mr. R. McK. Morison, who demonstrated on several branches of agriculture. The appointment of Miss E. A. Jackson, M.A., enabled the scientific teaching to be considerably extended. This teacher has been responsible for the chemistry and physical science of the first-year students, as well as botany and hygiene for the same class.

In addition to the dairy science and agriculture classes, Mr. Morgan has taken chemistry and physical science with the Public Service Junior classes, as well as the advanced science work.

A two-years course has been provided in chemistry and physics, and the aim of the instruction has been to inculcate elementary principles that could be applied to the cognate subjects dairying, botany, and agriculture. As it is so absolutely essential that these principles should be thoroughly mastered, great attention has been paid to them. Besides serving as the foundation for other subjects, these sciences were taken by candidates at the Public Service Junior Examination. There is still scope, however, for more advanced work in these subjects.

Dairying was probably the subject in which the students took keenest interest, due, no doubt, to the fact that the knowledge derived could be so easily applied to home needs. A feature of this year's work was the installation of a Gerber tester, and the comparison of results obtained by its use and the Babcock. In the hands of reliable students the Gerber gave results that compared very favourably with the more accurate but still more laborious gravimetric analysis; and its superiority as regards clearness of test, ease and rapidity of manipulation, over the Babcock was proved by students themselves.

Another feature of the year's work which proved of inestimable benefit to the scholars was the instruction given by Mr. Kirkman at the Stratford Butter-factory. This short course resolved itself into two sections—the first dealing with the manufacture of butter on a large scale, and the second the application of modern principles to home churning, separating, and working, and preparation for the market.

Elementary instruction, whenever possible out of doors, was given in surveying. The sighting-compass was used by the students in preparing sample road-maps, and for the purpose of elementary triangulation. The necessity of providing a model theodolite for this class was made apparent during the year, and this defect it is intended to remedy this year.

Girls of the first and second divisions took a course in hygiene under Miss Jackson, whose instruction included lessons on food, elementary physiology, and first aid. The school was indebted to Dr. T. L. Paget for kindly consenting to give a short course on those parts of the syllabus that could only be adequately interpreted by an expert. It is recommended that the various elements which are at present rather loosely connected be more closely correlated, so that a more comprehensive scheme of domestic science could be formulated for the girls of the rural division.

The work in agriculture alternated between laboratory experiments and outdoor work. The former included the chemistry of the subject, the testing of soils, manures, and seeds. The time available for outdoor work was spent in (1) the experimental plots—one on the cultivation of grasses under a scheme of co-operation with the Department of Agriculture, the other on the application of green-manuring to the cultivation of potatoes, mangolds, and turnips—(2) on the growing and care of the vine and tomato in the glasshouse. Mr. R. McK. Morison gave several lessons on pruning, grafting, and planting of fruit-trees.