

but they will give those who wish to become farmers an additional interest in their work, and also a training in scientific method which will assist them materially in their efforts to solve many of the problems of the farm. The weak point in the system is the lack in the North Island of some distinctly vocational institution on the lines of Lincoln College in Canterbury, where our rural-scholarship winners could effectively carry on their agricultural training. Another obstacle to the success of any practical or vocational course is the examination incubus, which dominates our system from the University college to the primary school. Many parents contend that their children are handicapped unless they can prepare for the Public Service and Matriculation Examinations, and as these examinations are at present constituted it is not possible for the limited staffs of our district high schools to carry on the practical training and at the same time prepare pupils for matriculation. As far as the Public Service examinations are concerned, the difficulty might be met by a slight modification of the rural course, such as limiting the branches of science to be taught and adding elementary mathematics as a subject. The problem, however, is not so easy in the case of matriculation, as a language other than English is necessary for this examination, and to introduce another language into the rural course as a compulsory subject would be of little benefit to the majority of district-high-school pupils who enter on their secondary course at fourteen, and leave school within two years. These pupils would not be able to pursue the study of a foreign language to a profitable stage, and for them the time would be better spent in studying some subject of more advantage to them in life. We admit that written examinations alone should not influence us in deciding what subjects are to be taught in a practical course; but to enable us to meet the wishes of as many parents as possible, under present conditions we are forced to advocate some sort of a compromise. Unfortunately, so long as success or failure at the formal written examination continues to be practically the only public criterion of the efficiency or value of our educational system, so long will courses of instruction in which practical training forms an important feature be depreciated in the eyes of both pupils and parents. That written examinations—which form only one part of an educational system—should so dominate the whole is a condition strongly to be deprecated.

During the March quarter the average roll of the secondary classes of our nine district high schools was 392. In December it fell to 291, a loss of about 100 pupils, or roughly 25 per cent. Between thirty and forty of these were transfers to technical and secondary schools; but of the remainder most of the girls left to undertake home duties, and the boys to enter upon commercial, industrial, and agricultural pursuits. This shows that a large proportion of the pupils who gain free places leave school between the ages of fifteen and sixteen; but as the same complaint also comes from secondary schools with classical and commercial courses, the rural or any other practical course cannot be alleged to be the sole cause of this want of appreciation of free secondary education.

HAWKE'S BAY.

The district high schools have their programs of the first two years based on the rural course; thereafter matriculation, generally with a rural bias, becomes their aim. In both courses excellent work is being done, and the classes have been carried on with conspicuous success. The standard compares favourably with that of secondary schools. Seven of their candidates qualified for matriculation, and three gained partial pass; these schools also prepared pupils successfully for Junior and Senior Public Service Entrance. The total average number of students in attendance at the three schools was 106, of whom ninety were taking the rural course. An increase is expected during 1914. The salaries of secondary assistants, while improved under the amended Education Act of last year, are not yet a reasonable assessment of their services, and thus it is difficult to retain the most expert teachers for that class of work. We hope to see a district high school at Wairoa shortly. The grants made by the Wairoa County Council to foster secondary education deserve special mention; it is a feature in local government that might be more generally followed by County Councils on behalf of bright children in their respective counties.

GREY.

Secondary Education.—Since furnishing my report on the secondary department of the Greymouth District High School the results of the public examinations have been announced. These show that one student fifteen years of age has added to his past successes a full pass in the Public Service Senior Examination; another pupil passed the Public Service Entrance Examination with credit, and also in three subjects of the Public Service Senior; one passed the Matriculation and Solicitors' General Knowledge; and eight the intermediate non-competitive examination.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

District High Schools.—The returns show 334 pupils on the roll, which is an increase of thirty-seven on the numbers of the previous year. District high schools have been reopened at Darfield and Oxford East, and the rural courses taken at these schools as well as those previously in operation at Lincoln and Kaikoura are giving satisfactory evidence of meeting the educational requirements of agricultural centres. All of our district high schools are maintaining their reputation for healthy tone, solid work, and gratifying results.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

It is a matter of regret that there was a decrease in the attendance at each of our district high schools, the roll number at the time of the annual examination falling from 135 in 1912 to 106 in 1913. The decrease was equally distributed over the three schools, and is mainly accounted for by the demand for boys in mercantile and industrial pursuits and for girls in home duties. The scheme of rural instruc-