

It is pleasing to be able to state that whilst, when this work was introduced into the schools in 1903, there was considerable opposition on the part of parents and teachers, to-day the value of the training given is generally recognized, and the demand from country districts for the introduction of the work into their midst is only curtailed by the difficulty in obtaining grants from the Department in aid of the erection of the necessary buildings.

It is gratifying to note, too, that whilst it was necessary in 1903 to import from England the six original teachers to commence this work, most of our centres are now staffed by men and women who received their training with us.

*Elementary Agriculture.*—The number of schools last year in which elementary agriculture was taught was 238, an increase of forty-six over the previous year, the number of pupils receiving instruction being 3,907. This increase in the number of schools taking up the subject was largely due to the energy of the itinerant agricultural instructor, Mr. J. P. Kalaugher. It is, I think, greatly to be regretted that the Board discontinued last year the giving of special prizes to schools showing the greatest improvement in school-gardens. Properly carried out, a school-garden can be made a very great educational factor in connection with the ordinary curriculum of the primary school. As pointed out in one of my previous reports, the school-garden should serve at least the following purposes:—(1.) As a means of helping to beautify school-grounds. (2.) As a means of making the pupils acquainted with plant-life and of helping them to understand and take an intelligent interest in the properties of soils, the conservation of moisture, insect friends and foes, &c. Above all, it gives the live teacher an opportunity of vitalizing the ordinary work of the school by correlating geography. As far as possible, all work should be done, and every operation faithfully recorded, by means of writing, drawing, &c., by the pupils themselves. For the teacher to perform the work and then to dictate to the pupils the notes they are to take is almost worse than useless. Teachers who adopt an intelligent scheme of co-ordination will be astonished at the improvement of their pupils in composition, drawing, arithmetic, &c. Again, it is very little use to grow, say, a large crop of potatoes if in growing them the pupils do not learn something about the way they grow, their roots, stalks, leaves, &c. (3.) It will make the child take a more intelligent and keener interest in the home-garden if the training is directed by the teacher as it should be.

That many of the schools have realized the possibilities of the school-garden as above indicated can be made obvious by a visit to such schools. In particular, I should like to draw attention to the school-grounds of the Maungawhau Public School, Mount Eden—a school which, although only opened two years ago, can already show grounds laid out in a manner which would be a credit to any school in the Dominion.

The rural course in district high schools, as suggested by the Department, is intended to provide a sound secondary education for pupils between the ages of fourteen and seventeen years of age, a strong bias being given in the direction of fitting the pupils for life in the country. The curriculum embraces the following: English, history, agriculture (including work in school-gardens), mathematics, botany, physics, chemistry, hygiene, physiology, &c., as well as cookery, laundry-work, and dressmaking for girls, and woodwork, building-construction, &c., for boys. Last year, in order that this work should be carried out on the best lines, it was necessary to appoint an additional itinerant instructor. The work done by Mr. A. V. Donnan in these schools since his appointment in 1913 was so satisfactory that the Board had no hesitation in appointing another Hawkesbury College man as additional instructor. Mr. J. H. Hadfield, who at the time of his appointment was instructor in agriculture at the Hawkesbury College, New South Wales, commenced his duties in September last, and since that time has put in some admirable work. The schools which took up the rural course last year, and the number of pupils in each, were as follows: Waihi, 45; Cambridge, 19; Paeroa, 36; and Pukekohe, 12.

As in previous years, short courses in agriculture for teachers of primary schools were held at the Technical College. At the courses held in January sixty-three attended, whilst twenty-four attended in June and July, sixteen in August and September, and forty in September and October, making a total of 143.

For some years past an important function of the Technical Education and Manual Training Branch has been to provide special training for teachers, such as short courses in agriculture, art, hand-work, &c.; for teachers in the country, weekly classes in the evening and on Saturday mornings for teachers within reach of the Technical College, and classes in special subjects for students of the Training College. In addition to such classes, last year an important departure was made in arranging special classes at the Technical College for all the pupil-teachers in the city and suburbs of Auckland. The students of the Auckland Training College last year received instruction in art, domestic science, agriculture, and woodwork. Special short courses in botany and hygiene were held at the Technical College at various periods of the year to provide the necessary practical instruction, in accordance with the Department's requirements, for those teachers in country districts who contemplated sitting for their D or C certificates. In these courses, which were usually held for a fortnight, practically the whole of the time was devoted to individual practical work by the teachers themselves, the necessary theoretical instruction having as a rule been previously given by means of correspondence classes. The courses in hygiene were attended by 142 teachers, and the courses in botany by 103 teachers.

Teachers' classes were carried on at the Technical College during the evenings and on Saturday mornings from March to September, and were attended by assistants and pupil-teachers preparing for the C and D examinations of the Education Department. The classes were much appreciated by the teachers attending them, and there is no doubt that many of the pupil-teachers will benefit largely by being able to enter the Training College with higher academic qualifications than they otherwise would possess, and be thus enabled to spend a portion of the time whilst they are students of the Training College in keeping terms at the University. The total roll number of these classes was 683, as compared with 300 for the previous year.