

OTAGO.

(Chairman, Mr. J. WALLACE.)

Elementary Agriculture.—This work continues to make good progress under the direction of three instructors. Board members have noted in their visits to schools the marked difference in the appearance and quality of the work in different gardens. To some extent soil and locality will account for this, but the Board is inclined to think that the enthusiasm of the teacher for this branch of school work is the contributing factor. A well-cared-for garden and an attractive environment give the visitor a good first impression, and this is a point worth noting by teachers.

Training College.—The Board still presses the need of a hostel for female students. A similar need exists for male students, but the fact that a fine site has been acquired for the first-named purpose is a definite inducement for the Department to proceed with the building. During the year seventy-five women and sixty-one men boarded in private establishments. The Principal states that the number of suitable boardinghouses is, in comparison with the number of students, totally inadequate; that the housing of students with boarders not similarly engaged in study usually militates against the satisfactory performance of college-work; and, further, that adequate facilities for studying rarely exist in the average boardinghouse, students frequently having to decide between the quiet of unheated bedrooms and the distraction of the general sitting-room. The Board is satisfied that there is a real need for the establishment of comfortable hostels where students will be under reasonable control and supervision. It is of supreme importance to the State that it secures the highest mental, physical, and moral efficiency in its future teachers.

Class for Speech Defects and Hard-of-hearing Children.—The Board is particularly impressed with the importance of the work being carried out by this class. Among the full-time pupils are hard-of-hearing children who require to learn lip-reading, stammerers, children who are dumb but who have perfect hearing, and children with unintelligible speech. With the first two groups, assistance can be given along recognized lines, but with the last two each case must be studied and dealt with individually. In one instance the teacher required to work with the pupil for two months before one sound was uttered. All of these children can now speak normally or are well on the road to doing so. As they are children of normal intelligence, they are being given the opportunity of becoming useful citizens, whereas without this specialized aid they would have continued a burden to themselves and their relations. There are a certain number of high-grade thyroid-gland cases which cannot be satisfactorily treated at the school, simply because the teacher has not the available time. The teacher in charge expresses the opinion that speech-defects are increasing. Two years have passed since the reopening of the school and, out of a waiting-list of 104 names furnished by the Dunedin schools at that time, there are still forty who have received no aid owing to the classes being full. The Board cannot commend too highly the self-sacrificing nature of the work which Miss Williams is performing.

School Committees.—The Board is glad to be able to report that School Committees as a whole are taking a broader and more enlightened view of their duties. This is evidenced by the larger amount raised locally each year for expenditure on improvements both inside and outside the school. During the past five years voluntary contributions have increased as follows: £878, £1,309, £2,235, £2,623, and £3,797. Most committeemen agree that the children are worth serving, and that they will be better children if their school days are spent in an ideal environment. The State cannot do everything, but School Committees in co-operation with teachers and parents have a great field of work in improving the æsthetic side of school life and in adding to the comfort of the children.

SOUTHLAND.

(Chairman, Mr. A. W. JONES.)

Consolidation of Schools.—The Board is whole-heartedly in favour of consolidation wherever it can be satisfactorily arranged, and even though in some cases consolidation may not effect a saving, yet the advantages children derive from attendance at a large school more than compensate for the little extra expense entailed.

Agriculture.—Recognized classes in elementary agriculture were carried on during the year at 153 schools, an increase of eight over the corresponding figures for the previous year. Under the direction of the Board's agricultural instructor good work continues to be done in this subject. That children can be led to take a pride in their school-garden work is abundantly evident in the increasing number of schools where excellent gardens may be seen. Hand in hand with this work goes the beautification of school-grounds, and it is pleasing to report the increased interest that is being manifested in making school-grounds attractive. The transformation that has been effected in some cases within a few years is wonderful, and bears abundant testimony to the energy and enthusiasm displayed by some School Committees and teachers in raising funds wherewith to make their grounds the show places of the district. Unfortunately, however, there are still many school districts where the benefits derived from having a beautiful environment are not yet appreciated.