

fact that a more general introduction of handwork into schools is being postponed until the issue of a more elastic syllabus renders the teaching of handwork throughout the school course a simpler matter than at present it appears to be, also to the fact that it is in some districts considered desirable to have the teachers as thoroughly trained as circumstances will permit before requiring them to take up definite courses of work in their schools.

2. The disinclination on the part of not a few teachers to add what they consider new subjects to what they are already required to teach. As a matter of fact, handwork is not to be regarded strictly as a new subject; it is, when treated as it should be, a valuable aid to the teaching of other subjects of the school course; it may even be described, at all events as far as some of its branches are concerned, as a special method of teaching other subjects. Teachers who have realised this—and we are glad to be able to say there are many who have—know that the general work of the school suffers in no way by the introduction of handwork, that the instruction reacts favourably on the other work, and that it gives children an opportunity of gaining at least some knowledge at first hand.

3. The absence from the infant departments of many schools of suitable furniture and appliances for the teaching of handwork, and the difficulty in many cases of obtaining the necessary apparatus and material. These have no doubt hindered to some extent the progress of the work, but there are indications that, in some districts at any rate, the question of providing suitable desks will receive attention at the hands of the Boards; and the fact that some of the Boards have seen their way to place the supply of apparatus and material to schools on a workable footing seems to show that the difficulty referred to is not insurmountable. There is no doubt, from what is already being done in that direction, that the Government grants for apparatus and the capitation earned by the classes would be used most economically if the Boards themselves supplied direct to the schools what was necessary.

In addition to the more elementary forms of handwork, cookery, woodwork, and, to a less extent, cottage gardening, ambulance-work, and swimming, are being taught to an increasing number of the pupils in the upper standards of the schools. In Wellington cookery, and in Christchurch, Dunedin, and Invercargill cookery and woodwork, are being successfully taught on the "central" system, while similar arrangements are being made by the Auckland Board in connection with the city and suburban schools. Many of the teachers in the North Canterbury, Otago, and Southland Districts are attending special training classes, with the object of obtaining the certificates of the City and Guilds of London Institute for cookery and woodwork. At the examination of the Institute held in the colony this year, eighteen out of twenty teachers who presented themselves for examination passed in cookery, while nineteen out of twenty-eight teachers passed in woodwork. As far as these two subjects are concerned, therefore, one of the hindrances to the introduction of handwork into the upper standards—namely, the scarcity of competent instructors—may be said to be gradually disappearing.

There is an increasing desire on the part of teachers possessing the necessary knowledge and the facilities for applying that knowledge to introduce cottage gardening into their school course; especially in this so in the Otago District. Next year we expect to see quite a number of teachers in that district conducting classes for cottage gardening under the Act. Where circumstances permit this subject should be largely taken up by teachers of country schools, especially if agriculture is one of the subjects of the school course. A cottage garden conducted on proper lines—as, for example, are the gardens in connection with the Boscombe British School—may be said to stand in the same relation to the class for agriculture as the laboratory does to a science class.

Up to the present, a few only of the secondary schools have seen their way to take advantage of the provisions of the Act. The subjects of instruction most commonly taken up are advanced drawing, physics, chemistry, cookery, woodwork, and dressmaking.

During the year over 360 school classes were recognised under the Act. The number of classes in the several districts and the subjects of instruction taken up are given in Table XI. attached to the report.

B. TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

The special reports received from the authorities of the various technical and art schools, and included in this report, set forth fully what has been accomplished in the way of technical instruction during the year. There are now fourteen technical and art schools in the colony, some of which may be said to be fairly well equipped with suitable furniture, apparatus, and appliances. In a few instances the buildings in which the classes are held are not altogether suitable for the purpose, the available accommodation being in some cases of a temporary or makeshift character, and not always in the same building. In spite of these drawbacks, the removal of which is, it is to be hoped, only a question of time, much good work has been done, and though here and there there is room for considerable improvement in the character and quality of work, yet when the many circumstances militating against the efforts, local and otherwise, that are being increasingly made to place technical instruction on a sound footing are taken into account, it may safely be said that evidence is not wanting that the work done in the technical schools is distinctly in advance of that of previous years. One of the difficulties we have always with us is the scarcity of competent and trained instructors—of men who are thoroughly acquainted with the principles that underlie the practice, of men who not only "know how," but also "know why." Our hope in this direction lies in the larger and longer-established schools, to which we may fairly look, as time goes on, for instructors of the type indicated above. The class is, other things being equal, what its instructor makes it, and we would like to emphasize this fact: that, while an up-to-date school equipped on the best modern lines is a very desirable acquisition, such a school is practically useless unless it can obtain thoroughly competent instructors.