

In New Zealand the problem of registration of trained teachers does not make itself felt; in Victoria it is an urgent necessity arising out of want of organization, and its satisfactory solution must be regarded as a first condition of efficiency.

Higher Primary Education.

Higher primary education is provided for under the Education Boards by a provision which gives a fixed grant of £30 per annum for each district high school established, and a capitation grant, varying according to the number of higher-subjects taken up, for each pupil who has passed the Sixth Standard examination. In 1902 there were thirty-eight district high schools distributed throughout the colony, giving free higher primary education to 1,426 pupils at an added cost of £5,199 13s. 8d. At the date of my visit the district high schools had increased to fifty. These district high schools may be made a most effective aid in developing a good system of technical instruction. At present they appear to me to devote too much attention to what are usually called "high school" subjects. No doubt, before long the work will become genuine "continuation work" of a distinctly practical nature, having close relation to the material needs of the districts served by the schools. They will thus become elementary technical schools, and with vigorous and capable handling they should, in country districts especially, be able to solve many of the problems involved in agricultural education. Here again the wise forethought of the New Zealand pioneer scores, for most of the schools have generous areas of land surrounding them. In some of the recently built district high schools, such as that of Palmerston North, elaborate provision is made for laboratory work in science, and for manual work, cookery, and drawing. The district-high-school plan is certainly the cheapest form of continuation work. It really amounts to the establishment of two or more senior classes in favourably situated primary schools by supplying additional staff. The benefits of the system to the residents of country districts are very great indeed, and it was no uncommon sight to see the horse-paddock attached to the school filled with the ponies which had brought the senior scholars in from the surrounding farms. There is little fear for the future of the district high schools if they are worked in accordance with the admirable advice tendered by the Inspector-General (Mr. G. Hogben) in his latest report:—

It seems to be necessary to utter a note of warning with regard to the syllabus of work that is being taken up in the district high schools. It may be safely laid down that the secondary instruction given in these schools should have a bearing on the future life of the pupils. . . . There is too much tendency at present in the district high schools to give the secondary pupils a little Latin or French and a little elementary algebra or Euclid, and to avoid science and manual and commercial training. The aim in view in establishing district high schools will probably be gained if these schools give the pupils a good taste for standard English literature, a thorough training in ordinary English composition, and in arithmetic and mensuration, and such knowledge of history and geography as will enable them to understand better their duties as citizens of the Empire; adding thereto a course in elementary science in which the observations and experiments are carried out by every pupil for himself, and a suitable course of manual work or of commercial work where local conditions demand it. These essentials being secured, other subjects may be taken up if room can be found for them. . . . The grants for manual instruction (including practical science) under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act are payable to the school classes in addition to the special district-high-school grant, so that there is no excuse on the ground of expense for the comparative neglect of those subjects. There is no reason why any of our district high schools, or, indeed, any of our secondary schools, should take as their model the lower forms of an old English grammar school. (Report, 1903, page 8, E.—12.)

I commend again to the notice of the Government the desirability of establishing district continuation schools on some such basis as those of New Zealand.

Evening Continuation Work.

The New Zealand Act provides, moreover, for the payment of special capitation grants for evening continuation classes, and the Department is anxious to establish them in all centres. The following extract from the latest report is interesting:—

The number of continuation classes is still much smaller than it ought to be; technical education to be sound must have for its basis a reasonable standard of general education, and the way would be prepared for a larger and fuller measure of technical education in the near future if in connection with all our schools, primary and secondary, there were established continuation classes giving to those who have left the day schools the opportunity of continuing their general education at evening classes, and of beginning at the same time the technical education suited to the trade or profession in which they are engaged during the day. It is with the local authorities that the initiative must rest. There is no reason why every school except the very smallest should not have its continuation classes. I would earnestly impress upon the Committees and teachers of country schools the immense benefit they would confer upon the youth in their respective districts by establishing without delay classes in such subjects as English, arithmetic, and elementary mensuration, and book-keeping, adding thereto elementary agriculture, taken in a practical way, so as to give their pupils some idea of the nature of plant-life and of plant-growth, and of the structure and life-history of the animals useful or otherwise to the farmer. In mining districts elementary practical geology, mechanics, and surveying might be substituted for agriculture; and in most cases some drawing should be added, especially drawing to scale of a more advanced character than that done in the classes of the primary schools. No expensive apparatus would be required; grants are available to meet the cost of the necessary outfit for such instruction; and the capitation payable under the Act would be sufficient not only to meet the expenditure upon the maintenance of the classes, but, if a small fee were charged, sufficient to provide very fair remuneration for the instruction. If, indeed, courses were established complying with the very moderate requirements of the regulations for junior and senior technical scholarships, sufficient funds would be provided for all these purposes without charging any fees at all. . . . One of the most useful things, for instance, that an agricultural association could do in conjunction, say, with an education Board would be to establish in its district classes conducted by a well-qualified agricultural instructor for training young farmers and teachers in the elements of some branch or branches of agriculture suited to the district. The Department would do what it has always done when requested in such cases, send one of its Inspectors to explain what initial step should be taken, and generally to advise the local authorities as to the work of the classes. Similarly, in mining districts or in towns, good work might be done by local authorities or societies in encouraging the formation of classes.

Here is another lesson from New Zealand we can well take to heart. The higher technical schools cannot hope to be truly successful unless the gap from primary to technical school is bridged, and it is best bridged by the day and evening continuation classes. Interest is required, however, outside of the Department from parents, employers, and industrial organizations. Nor is the problem wholly an educational one. Many of the social dangers arising out of ill-spent leisure time would be avoided if our young people were more fully encouraged towards self-improvement.