

The various engagements of the Auckland instructor would appear to leave him little time for visiting schools; he keeps himself in touch with teachers by issuing from time to time pamphlets, bulletins, and leaflets containing helpful suggestions as to garden operations, apparatus, various phases of nature-study, &c.

The Wanganui Board has appointed two special instructors, one in agriculture, the other dairying. Besides visiting schools for the purpose of advising teachers and giving demonstrations in their respective subjects, these officers conduct at various centres Saturday classes for teachers as well as for farmers.

In Wellington, as in Auckland, it is felt that the instruction of teachers in such a subject as elementary agriculture cannot be successfully carried out by means of Saturday classes; the Board has consequently made arrangements by which a limited number of teachers may attend, for a fortnight at a time, one or other of the centres. When not engaged with these teachers' classes, the instructor visits the schools that have included elementary agriculture in their scheme of study.

The salaries of the special instructors are paid from various sources. In Auckland the classes in operation earn sufficient capitation to meet the total of Mr. Jackson's salary. In Wanganui the remuneration paid to Mr. Grant is £300. Towards this sum the amount of £20 from the grant for the training of teachers was appropriated last year; the capitation earned amounted to £150 1s. 2d.; the balance had to be made good by the Board. For the year 1907 the loss on the year's operations amounted to £168 7s. 2d. In New Plymouth the instructor has no stated salary, but receives £1 5s. per school visited, and he has twenty schools to look after. He is a nursery-gardener by trade, he lives in the country, uses his own buggy when visiting the schools, and stays with friends. In addition, he conducts teachers' Saturday classes in elementary agriculture, and for this service receives a fee of £1 1s. per day. In Wellington Mr. Davies receives a salary of £300 per annum. Last year £175 of the teachers' training grant was devoted towards the salary, about £100 was received in capitation on the forty classes under instruction, and the balance of about £40 (including expenses) was met out of the Board's funds. In Southland the number of schools carrying on classes in agriculture at the end of 1907 was fifteen. The total capitation received on account of the 179 scholars in average attendance at these classes amounted to £22 2s. 6d. This year the number of classes has increased to thirty-two, and the estimated capitation thereon will amount to somewhere about £60.

We have on other occasions endeavoured to make clear to the Board what, in our opinion, is connoted by the phrase "elementary agriculture in primary schools" (see Inspectors' report for 1907), and what is the function and purpose of a school garden. In an article in the *Nineteenth Century* of recent date, Mr. J. C. Mead, an authority of repute in England, emphasizes the proposition that the aim of the school garden and of all teaching connected therewith is educational, not technical. "Any attempt," he writes, "to remodel the curriculum of the village school from the agricultural standpoint alone is wrong in principle, and certain to result in disappointment. The schools have to provide for thousands who under no circumstances will be concerned with the cultivation of the soil, and their function is to stimulate intelligence, application, self-reliance, and adaptability in all the pupils indiscriminately. These qualities are as necessary in the factory as in the farm. The most that can reasonably be expected from making the schooling of country children correspond with their environment is that their minds will not be diverted from rural pursuits, that they will be better fitted to engage in them with profit, and that they will be less influenced by the glamour of the town. . . . The function of the school is to educate—not to prepare for any trade or industry. Wide general knowledge is an essential antecedent to all specialisation, whether it relates to the farm, the workshop, the factory, or the office." And Mr. Hogben, in an address delivered before the Hawke's Bay Farmers' Union, expresses similar views: "I note especially," he says, "the stress laid by Mr. Hall on the necessity for sound preliminary work in the primary schools—such work to include nature-study and the keeping of school gardens—not so much with the view of imparting technical knowledge in agriculture, but rather as a part of general education, to train the observation and other personal powers of the children. . . . Very little instruction that can in the strict sense be called technical—i.e., bearing directly upon the principles that underlie a given trade or trades—can be given, or ought to be attempted, at a school, least of all at a primary school."

As our visit to the northern centres was made at a time when active work in the school gardens was suspended, and when the gardens themselves were in a more or less neglected condition, the data gathered by us may probably be regarded as insufficient to warrant us in pronouncing a definite opinion as to the quality and value of the work done in connection therewith. There was evidence, however, that many teachers have sufficiently realised the possibilities as well as the limitations of elementary agriculture as a school subject, and have properly appreciated its place in the school curriculum. On the other hand, the conviction is forced upon us that in many cases the purpose of the school garden is entirely misunderstood: the instruction is too technical, too much is attempted, and there appears to be a tendency to exalt unduly the horticultural and kitchen-garden point of view—to grow the finest bloom and the biggest turnip for exhibition at the local flower or agriculture show. Several Inspectors and teachers whom we interviewed expressed similar convictions; and other Inspectors have, in their reports, recorded opinions equally emphatic. In short, our investigations have furnished us with no valid reason for revising the opinion we have on other occasions conveyed to the Board, that for the successful treatment of elementary agriculture in our primary schools it is unnecessary to have a special instructor, and we are the more strongly confirmed in this opinion from observations we previously had opportunity of making in an education district where no such instructor has been appointed. We can say unreservedly that, in the district referred to, the work done by the teachers without the supervision and advice of an expert in agriculture reaches a high standard of excellence;