

TARANAKI.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

Teachers' Saturday Classes.—Saturday classes for the instruction of teachers under the Manual and Technical Regulations were held during the past year at New Plymouth and Stratford. The courses undertaken comprised the following subjects: Drawing, cardboard and plasticine modelling, cookery, hygiene, and dairy-work. In all sixty-six teachers attended the classes—thirty-four at New Plymouth and thirty-two at Stratford. The regularity of attendance has been far from satisfactory, and it seems to us that some steps should be taken by the Board to require a deposit from each teacher attending these classes, this deposit to be refunded if the attendance has been satisfactory. This appears necessary, as some of the teachers, if we are to judge by their attendance, are simply playing with the work, and do not seem to appreciate the efforts made to enable them to qualify themselves for their profession. At the beginning of last year the Department made a grant for the training of uncertificated teachers other than pupil-teachers and probationers. Accordingly classes were established for this purpose at Stratford, Opunake, and Urenui, the roll numbers being respectively twenty-eight, five, and four. The regularity of attendance at these classes was also very disappointing.

School Manual Classes.—During the year there were 100 schools in operation in the district, and the great number of these took up handwork in some form or other. In addition to the ordinary handwork subjects, instruction in woodwork, cookery, agriculture, dairy-work, chemistry, physiology and first aid, physical measurements, advanced needlework, botany, swimming, dressmaking, surveying, ironwork, &c., was recognized in 151 cases. Instruction in agriculture and dairy-work has been made a special feature. Forty-one schools have taken up agriculture. In each of the school-gardens a plot is usually set aside for experimental work, and each child is required to have a plan of the ground and keep a record of the gardening operations, showing the various manures used and the weights of the crops, &c. In addition, a course of instruction is given in elementary chemistry bearing on the work done. Twenty-five schools have covered a comprehensive course in dairy-work. Most of the schools taking up this subject are now well equipped with the apparatus for carrying on the necessary experimental work, and the pupils have had practical instruction in the chemical and physical properties of milk and of milk-testing by means of the Babcock tester. A special agriculture and dairy-work instructor visited the schools several times during the course of the year.

Rural Classes at Stratford District High School.—The following report by the headmaster of the District High School, Stratford, will give some indication of the course of instruction in rural subjects that has been carried out for several years in that institution. The number of pupils attending the rural classes in the secondary department of this school has again increased during the year. The progress of the scholars has been satisfactory: the second-year class, particularly, has done good work. In all subjects of their science course the pupils have evinced keen interest. In the cognate subjects—chemistry, physics, dairy science, and agriculture—the interest taken was very keen indeed. This was due, in my opinion, to a certain extent at least, to the fact that the instruction given was mainly practical. The laboratory-work in agriculture was chiefly confined to the analysis of soils and manures, and the knowledge so gained was applied to the manuring of the soil in the experimental plots. The greenhouse has again proved of great utility. Early plants—tomatoes, cabbages, cauliflowers—were grown in it, and when these were removed tomatoes for the season's crop were planted out. Unfortunately blight soon made its appearance among them, and the experience gained by the boys in dealing with the pest must be of great value to them. Pruning, spraying, &c., were all done by the boys. Experiments were continued on the growing of lucerne, with special reference to the value of soil-inoculation both by transference of soil from an inoculated plot and by green-manuring with clover. Fairly extensive experiments have recently been started on the comparative values of various manures applied to the growing carrots, swedes, mangolds, and potatoes, and the results of these will be available next year. Orchard-work was introduced during the year. In the early spring eighteen fruit-trees were purchased, and Mr. R. McK. Morison gave a demonstration on the planting and pruning of fruit-trees. Since then the boys have received lessons on spraying, and have themselves sprayed the young trees. Grape-vines have been purchased and planted out, and it is intended next year to place these vines in the greenhouse and commence the study of viticulture. Next year's scheme will also provide for a course of instruction in budding, grafting, pruning, and spraying of fruit-trees. An expert's services will be utilized in dealing with all orchard-work. Beekeeping will also be taken as a subject next year. In connexion with agriculture it is interesting to note that arrangements have been made whereby an officer of the Agricultural Department will be available at times to give instruction to the students of secondary schools in which agriculture is taught. This innovation was advocated by this school many years ago, and its adoption will be the means of standardizing the instruction in practical work in the subject and ultimately in raising the standard. The ideals of the Education and Agricultural Departments, however, differ somewhat—their outlook on agriculture is from different standpoints—and it remains to be seen how far the course of work recommended by the expert is suitable for adoption in school classes. Dairy-science classes have been carried on throughout the year. It is the first time this important subject has been placed among those optional for the Civil Service Junior Examination, and eighteen of our pupils selected it as one of their subjects. The students of the second year gave, at the Stratford Agricultural and Pastoral Show, a demonstration in the methods of estimating the butter-fat content of milk and the amount of moisture in butter. Next year it is intended to give instruction in the use of the Gerber tester, and it is hoped that results will be obtained to enable comparisons to be made between this method and that of the Babcock. As in the past, all pupils who have been two years in the school sat for examination in December either for Senior Free Places or for the Civil Service Junior; boys and girls took in common as subjects for examination, dairy science and elementary physical measurements. The boys took also agriculture and the girls botany.