

districts hitherto unprovided with facilities for this branch of practical education. During the year five new centres have been opened, and although the unavoidable curtailment of the train service has affected the attendances at some centres, as is proved by the decreased cost to the Government of the conveyance of pupils (£5,713, as against £6,335 in 1916), the average attendance in all subjects shows an increase over that of the previous year. The number of schools providing instruction in woodwork and ironwork for boys now stands at 534, and 554 schools make provision for girls in instruction in cookery, dressmaking, and laundry-work.

At 1,377 schools elementary agriculture (combined in some districts with elementary dairy-work), and supervised by qualified itinerant instructors, formed part of the regular school course. This instruction may have only an indirect bearing on the primary industries, but as it includes observational and experimental work in connection with school gardens and plots, its value as an educational factor appears to lie in the opportunity given to introduce the children to elementary scientific method.

A more or less complete course bearing on rural pursuits with a domestic trend in the case of girls was carried on in the secondary department of the district high schools as follows :—

District.					Number of Schools.	Number of Pupils.	Capitation earned.
							£
Auckland	..	..	..	..	6	260	1,753
Taranaki	..	..	..	..	1	71	481
Wanganui	..	..	..	..	6	158	926
Hawke's Bay	..	..	..	..	3	139	885
Wellington	..	..	..	..	6	216	1,376
Canterbury	..	..	..	..	10	219	1,453
Otago	..	..	..	..	6	166	1,110
Totals, 1917					38	1,229	£7,984
Totals, 1916					38	1,210	£7,794

The special science subjects of the rural course are for the most part taken by visiting instructors—an unsatisfactory arrangement, but the best that can be made under existing conditions. It is, however, to be hoped that the present increasing interest in and demand for science training will not disappear with the declaration of peace, but will gather sufficient strength to require that every teacher shall have a general knowledge of scientific principles, and to increase the proportion of teachers having a sound working knowledge of and being able to teach the elements of one or more sciences bearing directly on the principal industries of the Dominion. It is only in this way that the foundation can be laid on which a satisfactory superstructure of national science training may be erected.

Financial considerations due to the war have again rendered it necessary to postpone all excepting absolutely necessary works ; laboratory accommodation and equipment have, however, been provided during the year for four district high schools having hitherto more or less make-shift facilities for the teaching of practical science, so that nearly all district high schools are now provided with well-equipped laboratories. It is a matter for regret that in primary schools where this special provision is not available a subject such as elementary physical measurements is not more generally taught, in view of the fact that a most interesting and instructive series of lessons can be dealt with on the ordinary class-room desks. The number of approved classes for elementary science (chemistry and physics) and attended for the most part by pupils in the secondary department of the district high schools continues to increase slowly. The number of approved classes for swimming and life-saving also shows a slight increase.