

In some cases pupils have ready access to large experimental areas—*e.g.*, in Ashburton, to the 130-acre block farmed by the Department of Agriculture; in Hamilton, to the Ruakura Farm of Instruction. In visiting such farms each group of boys should be instructed to make special inquiry into some particular branch of the work; notes should be taken on the spot, compared and written up in school.

As far as we were able to judge, the most satisfactory course, from the standpoint of general education, was being carried out at two of the smaller schools, Whangarei and Rangiora. In both these schools the plots covered less than an acre, but valuable manurial and seed experiments, germination tests, &c., were being carried out and were intelligently understood by the pupils. Laboratory practice went side by side with field-work, and comparative notes were kept throughout. At Waitaki the subject was being treated perhaps more on vocational lines than elsewhere, as the boys taking agriculture spent the greater part of their time on that subject (including book-keeping, wool-classing, carpentry, &c.) with the intention of becoming farmers, and were not overburdened with other school subjects.

The Agriculture Department directs field operations at Ashburton and at New Plymouth, where a fairly large area is farmed, and the results are tabulated from the commercial standpoint. At the Marlborough High School a special feature is made of milk-testing and dairy-work. Useful work in agriculture is also done in Timaru and Nelson.

In some schools the principle is adopted of employing one instructor for theory and laboratory work and another for field-work. This practice has arisen from the fact that the regular teacher has no experience in outdoor work, while the "practical" man is not an experienced teacher. Such a system can be at best only a makeshift.

The study of agriculture should become more popular in our secondary schools, especially as it seems probable that before long it will be an ordinary subject for all examinations up to degree standard.

BOTANY AND HOME SCIENCE.

In the girls' schools botany is still the popular science for University scholarships, and is well taught; there is, however, in many of the good schools a noticeable absence of microscopic work.

As the main science, botany is now being seriously challenged by home science, a subject which with intelligent treatment should help greatly in the lives of our girls.

In most of the schools good work is being done both in laboratory practice and in the various branches of applied science—*e.g.*, cookery, dressmaking, laundry-work, &c. In home science, as in agriculture, it is necessary to lay strong emphasis on the advisability of making the course a well-balanced one. At present there are few teachers who are competent to take both branches of the subject (a defect which will probably remedy itself as home science becomes more widely studied), and the result often, or even generally, is that there is a marked lack of correlation between theory and laboratory work taken by one teacher and applied science taken by another.

There has been a good deal of difficulty in introducing the new subject into the syllabus, and a certain amount of disorganization has sometimes resulted, especially in schools that have no provision for the teaching of cookery, &c., and more particularly in mixed schools where previously boys and girls studied the same science.

It is argued by a good number of teachers that the programme as laid down is somewhat exacting for a two-years course, and possibly there is some truth in the contention that it involves more work than the programme in natural or physical science. A simplification of the syllabus for the Intermediate Examination in this subject therefore seems desirable.

HISTORY.

History is now a compulsory subject for all junior pupils. It is probably at present one of the least satisfactorily taught of all subjects, owing chiefly to a too faithful adherence to the matter and arrangement of the text-books and to the adoption of the old, discredited "Read and question method." The successful teacher will try to group the material of each lesson around one central idea; will not demand the learning of long lists of dates; will endeavour to give to various subjects a proper perspective, devoting less attention to genealogical tables and indecisive continental campaigns, more to great social movements and Imperial topics, and will enlist all the aids he can—literary references, maps, pictures, plans, coloured diagrams on the board, &c.—with a view to making the subject interesting and stimulating. In some schools a good attempt is made to visualize great events by throwing them into rough dramatic form.

GEOGRAPHY.

In a few schools geography is treated as a science and is well taught. Some experimental and observational work is done, rough maps are drawn with the help of plane-table and sight-rule, local data are often well used, and meteorological observations are taken and tabulated as a basis of climate-study and simple weather-forecasting. All this is work of a truly educative nature, and far removed from the old method of memorizing lists of countries, capitals, populations, and products.

COMMERCIAL WORK.

Most of the schools offer a more or less comprehensive course in book-keeping, generally in place of Latin. Some of the smaller schools make a special feature of this work, as they have to supply the place of a technical school. In some cases the usefulness of the course might be increased by the earlier introduction of business methods and commercial forms, but the subject is in most cases well taught, and, apart from its actual vocational value, it provides a useful training in method, neatness, and accuracy. Some schools add typewriting and shorthand to book-keeping, but the educative value of these subjects is decidedly low.