5. Training and Classification of Teachers.

During the inquiry the evidence brought before the Board tended to show that as far as the subjects of agriculture and nature-study are concerned, provision was wanting in the Training Colleges for the trainees to acquire a knowledge sufficient to fit them for the proper teaching of pupils in the primary schools, so that nature-study should be made attractive and the children trained to make careful observations in the district around them. It is not, of course, feasible to teach agriculture in the primary schools, but practical work in nature-study can be made at least as powerful an instrument for developing and training the mind as the more academic studies, and at the same time a knowledge and love of rural life and work can be instilled into the pupils. A pupil so trained would be prepared to take full advantage of a suitable rural course in a district high or other post-primary school, and could then pass on to a Farm Training College and be able at once to take advantage of the specialized training which the college would offer.

In order to provide an appropriate course in rural science and nature-study for teachers in training colleges, it would be necessary to give the training college sufficient land to allow for experimental work by the students in garden and nursery. In Dunedin the Training College has the use of municipal reserve lands adjoining the Botanical Gardens, and a similar provision in the other centres would be of great value. The municipal authorities might well be asked to grant the use of part of the Town Belt or other reserve for the purpose, since the proposal would not involve the sacrifice of any open-air space, but, on the other hand, would tend to beautify them.

With a view to encouraging teachers to take up seriously the study of rural science and agriculture, the Board considers that these subjects might well be made compulsory in the courses for teachers in training, or, if this were not found practicable, the Board recommends that special weight should be given to the subject of nature-study and agriculture in the Teachers' D and C Examinations and in the training-college course for primary-school teachers; and that grading increments be given for proficiency in agriculture and nature-study. In this recommendation the Board had in mind the practice in Holland, where, according to the evidence of Dr. Lotsy, teachers in the primary and high schools who have a special teacher's diploma in agriculture receive a special salary-increment whether they are actually teaching the subject or not.

In connection with the science work in the primary schools, and the supervision of the teaching in nature-study and rural science, the Board desires to call attention to the work of the itinerant instructors in agriculture who are employed by the several Boards of Education. These men are usually well qualified, and are doing excellent work in training both pupils and teachers, besides paying attention to the laying-out of school-gardens and helping the officers of the Department of Agriculture to control and judge the agricultural club competitions for girls and boys. The numbers given in the preface to this report show that additional instructors must be appointed if the supervision is to be adequate. The Board is also of opinion that the short courses in rural science and agriculture arranged for the teachers by these instructors are of great value and should be encouraged, and that for this purpose the resources of the Department of Agriculture should be used to the fullest extent possible, so that the teachers may be able to get first-hand information of the results of the investigational work of the Department of Agriculture, as well as gaining some practical experience under the direction of the expert instructors in the Farm Training Colleges.

6. Post-primary School Courses.

At a recent meeting of the University Senate the Chancellor prominently stressed the fact that although agriculture was the greatest industry in the Dominion, it was largely neglected in our schools. The Board had evidence that only about 10 per cent. of the boys in high schools take agriculture, although about 30 per cent. enter the industry after leaving school. The Board, therefore, made particular inquiries to find out why the subject should be so neglected. Educationists were asked whether they thought that the subject was not of sufficient educational value to be made a leading feature of the curricula of secondary schools. The replies indicated that a proper treatment of rural science and elementary agriculture in the high school would provide as fine mental training as could be had in any other way. In fact, Mr. Tate, Director of Education in Victoria, gave evidence that in his experience, though the study of agriculture apparently retarded the progress of the boys in the general subjects in the first year, yet in the sceond year the agricultural students were well to the front, and this he attributed to the fact that "many of the boys dealing merely with words in English or Latin were in the habit of reading books, and that when they got into a difficulty they turned to a dictionary, and had an attitude of mind entirely different from that of boys who were facing realities and being taught to think in terms not of words, but of things." Mr. Tate strongly expressed the opinion that "the boy who is well trained in agricultural science, and who uses the practical work, either in experimental plots on the school-farm or on a big scale, is getting a training that is very hard to beat in any school subject." The same view was expressed by officers of the Education Department, and also by other educationists. It was thus clearly established that the proper treatment of agricultural science in the high schools would not only be of immense benefit to the industry, but would also form one of the most valuable factors in the general education of the pupils.

There was also ample evidence that the Department of Education and the various Boards controlling post-primary schools were sedulously trying to make agricultural science a strong subject in the curriculum by providing facilities for teaching the subject considerably beyond the immediate demand for instruction. There being, therefore, no natural reason for the relative neglect of the subject, the Board was forced to the conclusion that some artificial restraint was at work to prevent it from becoming popular. Such a restraint was found in the conditions of the Matriculation Examination, which at present dominates the curricula of the secondary schools. Agricultural science