

has only been recognized as a half-subject for the Matriculation Examination since 1916 : that is to say, it may be taken as an alternative to botany or physiology in the second paper in the optional subject of natural science. The Matriculation Examination is a written examination (although certificates of having completed a practical course are required in connection with science subjects), and in consequence a book-work subject pays better than a practical subject for the time spent in preparation.

Also, agricultural science was not included among the subjects for the degree of Bachelor of Arts until 1922, so that a pupil taking this subject for matriculation could not, until recently, take it also for the ordinary degree in arts. Hence, few teachers in secondary schools have had any considerable training in agricultural science, and the natural trend has been towards more academic studies which have behind them the weight of many years of careful organization. The result is that pupils are handicapped so far as the Matriculation Examination is concerned by taking agricultural science, even if they propose to take a University course leading to the degree of Bachelor of Agriculture, and in consequence most pupils take subjects which tend rather to wean them away than to incline their hearts towards rural pursuits.

Evidence showed that the question of modifying the Matriculation Examination was being discussed by the Senate of the University, and that the Education Department and the teachers in post-primary schools were alive to the need for reform. It is possible that some kind of accrediting system whereby the pupil might be matriculated on the recommendation of the school authorities, or other authority recognized by the University, might be adopted with advantage, so that the schools would be less tied down to a single course for pupils wishing to matriculate, and other courses of a less academic character, but of equal or superior educational value, would be able to attract their share of the keener students.

The Board wishes to express the opinion that the evidence before it shows—(i) That the courses in secondary schools are dominated mainly by the requirements of the Matriculation Examination ; (ii) that elementary agriculture and nature-study are taken by only a small proportion of the boys in post-primary schools.

The Board is strongly of opinion that the subject of elementary agriculture and nature-study should be taken by all boys as a carefully correlated extension of the work done in nature-study in the primary schools, and therefore recommends that this subject should be compulsory in the courses for the Public Service Entrance, Intermediate, and Matriculation Examinations. The Board is further of opinion that any pupil taking the agricultural course in a secondary school, district high school, or technical school should be entitled to receive a “ lower leaving-certificate ” in respect of such course, provided that a satisfactory standard has been reached by the pupil in English and the special subjects of the agricultural course. The Board suggests that such standard might be fixed by an Inspector of the Education Department, in consultation with the Principal of the school.

7. AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS.

In order to cater more especially for those pupils who intend to enter on a degree or diploma course in agriculture at a University College, and to fill the gap between the primary-school work in nature-study and the professional courses in agriculture in the University, the Board recommends that in suitable centres high schools having a special section for agricultural teaching should be established, with hostels attached, and that the Principal of such a school should have a science degree (preferably B.Ag.) so as to be able to give students a suitable preparation for entering on the diploma or degree course in agriculture at the University. The evidence clearly showed that where high schools in rural centres surrounded by a large agricultural population were under the direction of suitable teachers holding science degrees, and managed by a Board of Managers in sympathy with the agricultural work, they were eminently successful. It was also noted that such success, while primarily due to the skill and enthusiasm of the teachers, was very considerably promoted by local interest and local financial support.

The Board therefore, without specifying any particular district where Agricultural High Schools should be established, thinks that the success of the whole scheme of agricultural education would be greatly furthered by the founding of such schools in places where the settlers themselves are prepared to come forward in support of the school and the teachers.

The Board further recommends, failing the adoption of a satisfactory system of accrediting students to the University, that there be instituted an agricultural preliminary examination in place of the Matriculation Examination for the degree of Bachelor of Agriculture, such examination to be the same as that of Matriculation, with the exception that an additional science subject may be taken in place of a foreign language.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BOARD.

The Board recommends—

I. *College of Agriculture :—*

- (1.) That one fully equipped and fully staffed residential College of Agriculture will be sufficient for many years to come, and that such an institution should not be established until a sufficient number of degree students is available, and, when established, should be placed in a central position.