

*Elementary Agriculture.*—Good work in this subject continues to be done in most schools, but there is considerable room for improvement in many cases. Reference has been made in previous reports to the necessity for some provision being made for school-gardens to be looked after during the summer vacation. It is pleasing to report that this is being done in a large number of schools, but still there are too many gardens to be seen where it is quite evident absolutely nothing was done. It is surely not impossible for the teachers concerned to make some arrangements whereby the gardens would receive some little attention at a period when growth is at a maximum.

*Woodwork and Cookery.*—Work in these subjects was carried on during the year for one term in Riverton, two terms in Gore, and at both centres in Invercargill for the whole year.

*Subsidies on Voluntary Contributions.*—Of the contributions for the year under review 66 per cent. was for the purpose of effecting improvements to school gardens and grounds; and when it is stated that these contributions represent an increase of over £333 above the corresponding figures for the previous year, one realizes the increasing interest that is being taken by School Committees and parents in the matter of improving the surroundings of their schools. The extent of the improvements being effected in the way of laying down concrete paths and drilling-areas, improving playing-areas and planting shelter-belts, &c., can be best realized when it is remembered that as the contributions raised carry in nearly all cases pound-for-pound subsidy, a sum of no less than £4,000 was made available for expenditure in the directions indicated. Unfortunately, however, there are still too many instances where the apathy of Committees and teachers is evidenced by the bare and uninviting appearance of the school surroundings.

*Visit of Duke and Duchess of York.*—In connection with the visit to this district of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and the Duchess of York, provision was made by the Railway Department for the conveyance of pupils from Standard III and upwards to three centres—Lumsden, Gore, and Invercargill.

*School Libraries.*—The number of applications received during the year for subsidies on contributions towards the purchase of books for school libraries was forty, the contributions received totalling £133 14s. 6d. The sums contributed by the Board in addition to the pound-for-pound subsidies from the Department amounted to £41 2s. 1d. It will be seen, therefore, that the amount made available during the year for expenditure on school libraries totalled £308 11s. 1d.

*School Furniture.*—It is pleasing to record that with the close of the year to which this report refers the Board had completed the equipping of all schools of Grade III and upwards with modern dual desks. It remains now, therefore, but to deal with sole-teacher schools, and this matter, which is not without its problems in view of the fact that the school-building is in many places the only building available for public meetings, is due for consideration by the Board at an early date.

*Building Operations.*—In addition to the usual maintenance of school-buildings, erection of out-buildings, &c., the following works were completed during the year: Bluff—hot-water heating; Roslyn Bush—additions to school; Invercargill North—hot-water heating; Ohai—school and site, and residence; Wyndham—hot-water heating, and remodelling school; Invercargill Middle—infant department; Limestone Plains—rebuilding school; St. George—addition to school; East Gore—hot-water heating; Waikiwi—septic tank, &c. In addition, a new school at Wairio and a residence at Wyndham were nearing completion at the close of the year.

*Finance and Accounts.*—The total receipts for the year amounted to £142,553 1s. 4d., and the payments made during the same period were £146,037 12s. 9d. It is worthy of mention that the amount of the maintenance grant from the Department for 1927 was £7,127, but in view of the reduction to operate in 1928 the amount available for the year now entered will suffer a decrease to the extent of no less a sum than £1,340. As the expenditure on maintenance of school-buildings for the year under review exceeded the amount of the grant from your Department by £2,750, the Board is faced with the necessity for very considerably curtailing its operations.

*Conclusion.*—In conclusion, the Board desires to acknowledge the courtesy and fairness with which all applications have been met by your Department. The Board would also express to your Inspectors, Messrs. Strachan, Robertson, Service, and Hunter, its indebtedness for their valuable assistance and advice, and to School Committees for their hearty co-operation in all educational matters.

I have, &c.,

P. A. DE LA PERRELLE, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.