

In the teaching of history in lower forms and at the post-entrance stage a good deal of interesting and original work is being done, such as the compilation of individual illustrated historical sketches of the history of the Dominion by the younger pupils, and in the Sixth Forms the application of elementary research methods. In Fourth and Fifth Forms, however, many teachers allow themselves to be hampered by the necessity of imparting and revising the knowledge of sufficient facts for examination purposes. This is to be deplored, particularly in the Fourth Forms, for whom the Department's syllabus is intended to be suggestive only; a considerable enlargement of certain sections, and the curtailment of the treatment of others in accordance with the special tastes of the teacher, would be very desirable in many instances.

Geography has not yet succeeded in obtaining the place in our secondary schools' curricula to which its importance and its value as a medium of cultural training entitle it. Many Principals would gladly give the subject more attention than it receives at present, but for the difficulty in finding adequate time for a proper study of it. Where pupils learn two foreign languages there is admittedly little time for geography, but the subject should be a prominent constituent of every course provided for "modern" or non-Latin pupils.

The work in arithmetic submitted by the Senior National Scholarship and Public Service Entrance candidates at the last November examinations was of a disappointing standard, and was most severely criticized by the examiners. For this weakness the secondary schools must take their fair share of blame. In the past two or three years, however, teachers in secondary schools have complained that the pupils coming up from the primary schools are not as well-grounded in arithmetic as they used to be. So far as proficiency in mechanical processes is concerned, the complaint is certainly well founded. Whether it is because less time is now devoted to "tables" than in the past, or whether other subjects in the primary syllabus have engrossed more of the pupils' time and attention than formerly, is not easy to adjudge, but the inability of many entrants into our secondary schools to add or to multiply correctly has become disquietingly apparent in the past few years. It is obvious that unless the standard of arithmetic in our secondary schools is to fall our teachers must be prepared to devote more time and energy to the subject than has hitherto been the case. In the early stages it will be well to make some special effort to ensure mechanical accuracy before giving instruction in newer and more difficult branches of the subject.

Though the teaching of agriculture has by no means been neglected, there is little to record by way of progress. The subject, as a part of a semi-vocational course, is still taught in sixteen boys' or mixed secondary schools; but the percentage of boys taking it in these schools has not risen beyond that recorded in my last report (twenty-three). It is interesting to note that for the last three years (1927-29) the percentages of all boys leaving Departmental secondary schools to take up agricultural or pastoral pursuits have been seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen. Whether the prevailing economic depression will materially affect the percentage remains to be noted in next year's report. As many as 53 per cent. of the boys who completed their schooling at Rangiora High School last year took up farming-work, and this school is to be congratulated on the success attending its efforts to counteract the townward drift of young folk. Closely following Rangiora were Waitaki Boys' High School (48 per cent.), Dannevirke High School (40 per cent.), and Gore High School (37 per cent.). It is of some interest to observe that these figures are not very dissimilar to those of the technical high schools with the highest percentages—viz., Ashburton (53 per cent.), Pukekohe (52), and Feilding (45). Not all post-primary schools can be expected to turn out young farmers or farm-workers on such a generous scale, nor from an economic point of view would it be advisable or desirable to attempt to do so. The large city schools very naturally contribute much smaller proportions of youths to the ranks of those earning their living on the land, and, in consequence, the percentage of boys leaving all types of post-primary Departmental schools to take up farm work was in 1929 a modest twenty-one. In 1927 it was nineteen, but rose to twenty-one in the following year, and has since remained practically stationary. When from the 1926 census tables it is learnt that 28·18 per cent. of all male workers who described their industry or occupation were engaged in agricultural and pastoral pursuits, it would appear at first sight as if our schools were not coping with the normal demand for rural workers. It must not be forgotten, however, that as many as 2,433 boys left primary schools last year to work on farms, and it is probably not realized that 30 per cent. of the boys who completed their schooling at all types of public schools in New Zealand in 1927 took up farming on leaving school; in the following year the percentage rose to 31, and at that figure it remained last year also. These numbers are by no means alarmingly low, but the margin of security for an adequate supply of people permanently engaged in rural industries is undoubtedly small; and if, as is highly to be desired, the 1931 census is to record a greater rural quota than 28·18 per cent. it behoves all schools, and particularly the secondary schools, to avoid fostering unduly any tendencies that will encourage either an urban drift or the neglect of our greatest, almost our only, primary industry.

In conclusion, I am again pleased to record my appreciation of the efforts of the secondary-school staffs to maintain a high standard of efficiency and to co-operate willingly with the Inspectors in their work. I have also to express my appreciation of the whole-hearted co-operation of my colleagues.

I have, &c.,
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The Director of Education.