

classes. The compulsory provisions of the Education Act have not yet been invoked, but now that such classes have been in successful operation for some time, the question is worth considering whether the prejudices of the parents should continue to stand in the way of the children receiving the only type of education by which they can profit.

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL.

The Correspondence School continues to function effectively; at the end of the year there were on the roll over 1,300 primary and over 400 secondary pupils. Its courses are sufficiently comprehensive to take pupils from the preparatory classes to the University Entrance stage. The lessons are planned to suit especially the busy isolated home where little direct supervision is possible; their success is indicated not only by the number of pupils who annually gain their Certificates of Proficiency in Form II but by the fact that a number annually achieve success in the University Entrance (Matriculation) Examination. Among the number last year was one who had taken her whole primary and secondary course with the school.

While the school provides very effectively for a general primary and secondary course, there are, nevertheless, certain aspects of work that in their very nature cannot receive due attention—*e.g.*, physical education of a remedial nature, music, experimental science involving the use of dangerous materials.

The social education also that a young person receives through association with his fellows is lacking in great degree. The staff, however, is ever on the alert to provide compensatory advantages: there are companies of Lone Guides, and Lone Scouts, a circulating library of 2,000 volumes, a magazine section, a stamp collection and exchange club, a school museum, a camera club, a pen friendship club which conducts correspondence through six overseas agencies with pupils in all parts of the world. And in selecting members of the staff care is taken to see that some of them have been distinguished for their activities in games and organized sports.

Mention must be made of the course in needlecraft and dressmaking and the associated course in home science which is attracting the attention of the girls in rapidly increasing numbers, and winning the thorough appreciation of the parents. The home-science course is in charge of a graduate of the School of Domestic Science of the University of Otago; the needlecraft section is to be strengthened by the addition of specialists in art and handwork.

PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION.

The results of the annual Proficiency Examination were slightly better than last year, proficiency certificates being gained by 81 per cent. of the pupils in public schools and 82 per cent. in private schools, as compared with 79 per cent. and 78 per cent. respectively last year. This increase is probably due in some measure to the improved staffing of schools, especially small country schools referred to above.

In view of the repeated requests from some quarters for the abolition of this examination and the granting of these certificates on the recommendation of the head teachers, it is advisable to point out that this is the only detailed examination conducted by the Department during the whole primary course of eight years, and that at the end of such a course it is well to have some disinterested official estimate of the general standard of attainment reached. Such an examination, wisely conducted, should furnish also a valuable guide to the post-primary course any of these pupils should subsequently follow.

The privileges which a certificate of proficiency confers in securing further education or a position in industry or commerce has naturally claimed the attention of parents; it is to be regretted, however, that this interest has affected many teachers to such an extent that they have been so eager to obtain a high percentage of passes that they have concentrated unduly on the bare requirements of the examination and have neglected to some extent those aspects of the subjects which are not susceptible of estimate by a written examination. This attitude was intensified by the publication in some districts of the results of the examination and even by the publication of the names of the pupils. I am pleased to say that last December nearly all the Education Boards decided that the list would no longer be available for publication. The question also of giving more weight to the head teacher's recommendation in regard to the best pupils is also under consideration. These matters should materially assist in creating a school atmosphere in which a more generous education can be provided for all, and especially for the more gifted pupils.

CIVIC DUTIES.

From the reports of Inspectors it is clear that teachers are giving due attention to the training of their pupils in matters affecting the general welfare of the community. Through regular lessons and incidental references pupils are receiving useful information on such matters as temperance in many of its forms, in fire-prevention, in care of national property, and the preservation of native fauna and flora, and in the safe use of public roads and streets.

With the co-operation of Education Boards a beginning has been made by the Post Office with the establishment of a system of school savings-banks.

The province of the school to-day is rapidly extending; to quote the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education (England), the teacher is not only expected to teach the subjects traditionally associated with the school, but he is to be in a sense a doctor, a bank clerk, a dairyman, a librarian, a traffic expert, a gardener, a playground instructor, a water-conservator, a temperance lecturer, and a protector of animals. With the more efficient functioning of the training colleges many things are possible to enable the young person to fit more fully into the scheme of modern life.