

“A well-organized county scheme of school gardening often includes an exhibition of the produce in the summer, or a competition for a shield. While such a scheme has many advantages, it is especially necessary to ascertain that educational efficiency is not sacrificed to the desire to win a prize or trophy.”

Instruction in dairying has been confined to three districts. In some cases a combined course in agriculture and dairying is being carried out with satisfactory results.

Some particulars relating to classes for manual instruction in public schools will be found in Tables 1, 1A, and 1B, on pages 16 and 17.

In the secondary schools, twenty in number, in which recognised classes for manual instruction have been carried on, the subjects to which most attention has been given are woodwork, cookery, and various branches of natural and experimental science. Most of the schools are provided with well-equipped laboratories. The number of classes in operation during the year was 159, an increase of 10.

It is hoped that the efforts that are being made in the case of certain of the rural secondary schools to provide courses of agricultural instruction will prove successful. There are also indications of a desire in the case of some of the girls' schools to establish definite courses of domestic instruction. The movement, which has much to commend it, will be watched with interest.

Some particulars relating to classes for manual instruction in secondary schools will be found in Tables 2, 2A, and 2B, on pages 18 and 19.

B. TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

Details of the work of the various technical schools and classes for the year 1908 will be found in the reports of the controlling authorities or managers, as the case may be, attached to this report. Various details relating to technical instruction are given in Tables 3 to 8, inclusive, on pages 20-33.

The progress made by the technical schools and classes during the year may be regarded as satisfactory. A good deal has been accomplished in the direction of systematizing the work, in arranging courses of instruction, and in eliminating as far as possible what may be regarded as the merely trade element. It is, we believe, now generally recognised that the teaching of trades without reference to the principles that underlie them is not, properly, one of the functions of a technical school. The hope is expressed that the type of technical school that consists of aggregations of unrelated classes, having for the most part no direct bearing on the industries of the country, will in the near future disappear altogether. Then, and only then, can something like an adequate return for the expenditure on technical education be looked for.

The number of approved classes continues to increase. In all 1,505 classes were in operation during the year at 122 places, showing increases of 113 and 21 respectively. The number of persons receiving free technical education was 2,000, an increase of 126. Junior free places were held by 1,619 persons, of whom 848 were males and 771 females, and senior free places by 381 persons, of whom 248 were males and 133 females. In 1907 the number of senior free pupils was only 146, so that there has been a very considerable and gratifying increase in the number of persons taking advantage of the regulations governing senior free places which provide for three years' free education in addition to the period (two years), for which junior free places are tenable.

Of the day technical classes conducted at various centres and providing courses of instruction in groups of related subjects for pupils most of whom are fresh from the primary schools, it may be said that they are on a sound footing. The courses of instruction, and the qualifications of the instructors go to show that the students are well provided for, and, in the majority of classes the excellent practical work done is evidence that the students are receiving a sound training in elementary principles which they are able to apply effectively in the practical work, forming part of the course. It is found that not a few of those who have completed a two-years course at the day classes and have left to take up employment return to the school and enter the evening classes for the purpose of continuing their studies. These students are found to be, from all points of view, the most satisfactory type of students in attendance at the evening classes. Having received a preliminary training they are better able to attack the more advanced work taken up in such classes. Many of them having realised to some extent the value of the instruction received, take, as a result, a more intelligent interest in their work, and attend classes on three or more evenings a week. Given such students, it is a comparatively easy matter for controlling authorities to arrange comprehensive courses of work; but it is becoming an increasingly difficult problem to arrange work for that numerous class of students who enter the schools unable, on account of lack of previous training, to take full advantage of the instruction provided, and who, further, are unwilling to attend for more than one night or at most two nights a week. The attendance of such students is also frequently irregular.

This and similar problems are, however, not confined to New Zealand. Authorities in England and elsewhere have recognised by experience that the provision of elaborate and expensive buildings and equipment does not necessarily prove an effective means of attracting students, especially students of the class referred to above. In all large centres of population there are always to be found individuals fired with the ambition to improve themselves. These find their way to the classes, but the fact remains that the bulk of the rank and file of the young workers in the majority of industries do not attend the technical schools as they should, and the problem of how to secure their attendance is engaging the attention of education authorities, who have assumed heavy pecuniary responsibilities in the matter of buildings and equipment for technical instruction. The whole question is comprehensively dealt with by Professor Sadler in his “Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere,” a work that will well repay perusal. What are known as “continuation schools” appear to be destined to play no inconsiderable part in the solution of the problem under review. The purpose of these schools has been defined as follows: “To provide at convenient hours further instruction for those who have already