

the Board schools. Until the middle of the school year only woodwork for the boys and cooking and dressmaking alternately every half-year for the girls had been attempted for the benefit of the senior pupils. Provision had been made at Gisborne, Napier, Hastings, Waipawa, and in part at Woodville for giving instruction in the subjects named. A few other schools have participated in places where the railway trains were suitable, but much time has been lost, and none of the smaller schools have received any benefit. The Department's refusal to subsidise itinerant instructors in woodwork and dressmaking has led to the employment of an instructor in agriculture who will be able to visit even the smallest country schools and give instruction of the utmost importance to the children. Already schemes of instruction dealing with plants, soils, &c., have been issued, and the Board's decision requiring elementary agriculture to be taught in all schools will do much to foster the teaching of this really useful and interesting subject.

Woodwork and cookery alternately with dressmaking will still be continued in the places named, but it is considered that the additional subject can be taken in the larger schools in place of nature-study and perhaps of a subject like the oral lesson in English history. In places where woodwork and cookery have been taken there has been a tendency to diminish the time for instruction in reading and writing, but were the school life extended, as we think it should be, more definiteness of purpose and greater thoroughness could be gained than is possible under present conditions. The agricultural and pastoral societies and the County Councils have displayed much interest in the fostering of the systematic study of agriculture in the schools. The former bodies have mostly now established a "school garden" competition at their shows; and the latter are considering the granting of seeds, &c., for experimental work in the school gardens of the respective counties. It is likely also that a gold and a silver medal will be presented by each county to the school showing the highest progress in experimental agricultural work.

The District High Schools at Woodville, Waipawa, and Hastings are working steadily, and the results of the examinations in the case of Waipawa are very satisfactory. It is unlikely that the secondary departments of any of these schools will grow very much beyond the present attendance, but the absence of proper apparatus and appliances at Hastings and Woodville has certainly acted against the best interests of the schools; nor is it likely that the teaching can become effective under present inspection arrangements. We regret that no district high school has yet been established at Wairoa.

**TEACHERS.**—The number of teachers in the service of the Board at the close of the year was 302, classed as follows: (a) 165 certificated teachers, licenses 4; (b) sixty-four uncertificated teachers in charge of schools; (c) sixty pupil-teachers; (d) nine probationers. The distribution of these teachers over such an extensive district makes it difficult for them to meet together for Saturday instruction. Classes for instruction in the chemistry of soils, in elementary botany, and agriculture have been held at the Technical School at Napier and at Gisborne, and have been well attended by a number of teachers; but many of those who would benefit by the training cannot attend owing to distance. The only way to reach these teachers and help them to begin special school classes under the Manual and Technical Regulations is by means of the winter school. The work done at the winter school in the Poverty Bay district has already borne fruit, and a similar school in Napier or Dannevirke for the benefit of teachers who are unable to attend the Saturday classes would stimulate the teachers, and help on the extension of agricultural training in all the schools under the Board. The isolation of the country teacher is such that, unless brought into touch with newer conditions and higher aspirations, he loses heart, and his teaching soon becomes mere mechanical routine. And this leads to the question of the interchange of teachers. Assuming that provision were possible for meeting the cost of sending teachers from one school district to another without affecting salary or status, we feel that an interchange for three or six months in the case of country and town teachers would act beneficially upon schools and teachers alike. There are many capable country teachers in the Board's service who would render a good account of themselves in the larger schools; and valuable experience in organization and management could be gained by class teachers of large schools were they to exchange for a few months with teachers accustomed to instruct three or four classes, representing as many standards. The present Act makes an interchange of teachers possible, and were the plan to be brought into operation the change would act beneficially upon the work of the schools. Buildings and appliances add, no doubt, to the conveniences of instruction, but, after all, it is the teacher that makes the successful school, and encouragement should be given in such manner that the very best of a teacher's aims and aspirations should be brought into operation day by day.

**INSTRUCTION.**—The subjects of instruction call for separate remark. Under present regulations the school subjects are open to almost indefinite extension, and there is a tendency in some quarters to introduce subjects without reference to the powers of young children. The fable of "The Old Man and the Ass" at times rises before us when new proposals are made to admit additional subjects of instruction in the school syllabus. Teachers are often at their wits' end trying to find time for subjects that are non-essential, and we think that the chief weakness in the school-work to-day arises from the lack of definiteness in the work, and to the permission given to the inexperienced equally with the experienced teachers to promote children from class to class. Even this might be allowed were teachers brought into touch with one another by means of annual gatherings for the discussion of matters that are of vital importance to the furtherance of education. The work as now carried on in the schools is too hurried in the preparation. There seems to be a feverish anxiety to advance pupils into a higher class. Formerly the Inspector was the bugbear of the teacher, but the mantle has fallen on the parent, whose torments are more harassing than were Inspectors' examinations at their worst. The fact is that the work set down in the standard course, suitable as it is, cannot be done in six years; and the teachers, anxious as they are to promote pupils, allow ill-digested preparation to count for thoroughness. In the early years of school life the children can be moulded in what-