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NEW ZEALAND.

MANUAL TRAINING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

(PAPERS IN REFERENCE TO).

Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones, with the leave of the House.

A.—REPORT BY J. STRUTHERS, ESQ., ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND, ON SLOYD AND KINDERGARTEN OCCUPATIONS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

SIR,—

March, 1895.

At your request, I submit, for the consideration of their Lordships, the following observations on a department of school work which has now received a considerable development in the schools of the Edinburgh district. I do not propose to enter into a description of the various occupations, but shall aim only at giving such an account of the purpose, method, and results of this kind of teaching as shall enable a judgment to be formed as to whether its further extension in these schools and its introduction into others is desirable.

First, a word as to the term "sloyd" and its connection with kindergarten occupations. Sloyd is the pronunciation naturally given by English-speaking people to the Swedish word *slöjd*, which means "skill or dexterity of hand."* In its general sense the word may be applied to any system of instruction which aims at giving increased dexterity of hand to children, whatever the ulterior object may be. But in Sweden the word has also acquired a special sense. It is applied to certain systems of working in wood, iron, or other material, carefully thought out and widely practised in the schools of that country, which aim not so much at developing dexterity of hand, though that result is not in itself unimportant, as at making manual instruction *contribute towards the general education of the pupil*. Well-arranged and properly-conducted work of this kind—the qualifications are most important—is regarded as a very valuable, in some respects the most valuable, means available to the teacher of developing in the pupil such qualities as intelligence, practical judgment, exactness, perseverance, taste, power of initiative, individuality.

Of these systems the typical one, of which the others are mainly modifications or developments, is the system of woodwork taught in the Sloyd-Seminarium at Nääs, near Gothenburg. That school, presided over by Herr Otto Salomon, one of the most remarkable men in the educational world of to-day, has existed since 1872, and the system of woodwork taught there has been gradually elaborated and constantly revised in the light of the experience of the numerous teachers engaged in teaching it in elementary schools. To the institution at Nääs teachers from all parts of Sweden are sent to be trained in this part of their work. There they have an opportunity of acquiring the requisite technical skill, and they are at the same time instructed in the principles which underlie the system by means of lectures and discussions full of rich suggestiveness as to the whole field of education. Teachers from other countries also are admitted to certain of the courses, and receive instruction free of charge. They come from every country in Europe, from both the Old and the New World—even from Japan. Among them have been not a few teachers from both England and Scotland.

Into the distinctive features of the system—the use of the knife as an introductory tool, the making of completed models combining several exercises as against the practice of exercises separately, the use of curved and moulded forms not belonging to pure carpentry—I do not propose to enter. What is important to notice here is its main principle—viz., that work of the kind in question is not to be taught as an end in itself, but rather as a means of securing certain valuable results, to wit, those enumerated above. It is, in the director's phrase, "Sloyd in the service of the school," and is to be taught in due relation and subordination to other school studies.

The difference between manual training of this kind and manual training which aims simply at producing in the pupils a certain dexterity of hand which may be useful to them in the industrial occupations of after-life is fundamental, and cannot be too strongly insisted on. The difference of aim naturally leads to an entire difference of method. For example, if technical skill only is aimed at, probably the most effective means of securing it will be the frequent repetition of the same

* Adj. *slög* = skilful or dexterous: cf. Eng. word "sleight" in "sleight of hand."