historical readers, but in the larger schools direct oral instruction on carefully graded courses of lessons have been more frequently employed. During the past year an improvement has been noticeable in the method of dealing with civic instruction, and in several schools the treatment of this branch of the subject is deserving of commendation.

NATURE STUDY.—This subject, referred to at some length in our last year's report, still continues to grow in favour and in usefulness. Its value as an educative medium, and its possibilities in supplying a common fund on which to draw for so much of the other school-work, are gradually causing it to become one of the most welcome additions to the present syllabus of instruction. The necessity for co-ordination, however, does not yet seem to be fully recognised; and by this we mean not only co-ordination with other branches of school-work—*e.g.*, composition, drawing, arithmetic, geography—but the need for connecting the several lessons one with the other, and for making the work done in any one class or group prepare the way for what is to follow in the next higher class or group. This applies to work in all grades of schools, it being just as important that connection be made and overlapping avoided between classes in large schools as between those in smaller ones. In the course of our visits during the year we have had to draw attention repeatedly to programmes of work in which these matters were overlooked. Amongst the small schools there are still to be found some where Course A geography is made to serve for instruction in nature study as well. The wisdom of this step is not always clear; for although there are cases where the treatment of the geography course is sufficiently comprehensive and thorough to serve all the purposes of a nature-study programme, as a general rule the geography lessons are by no means so rich in supplying such material as is usually given under the name of nature study; and here we would like to refer briefly to the grouping in the case of sole-charge schools. We cannot think that to mass the whole school for instruction in this subject is likely to be followed by the best results; for such an arrangement must be attended by a good deal of inattention and restlessness in view of the varying range of intelligence between the classes. A better plan would be to divide the school into two groups, separating Standards IV to VI or Standards III to VI from the lower classes. In this way lessons could be given having due regard to the mental capacity of the pupil, with the result that the work in each division would be more satisfactory, educative, and thorough. For instance, the lower group might in a simple way examine the parts of a plant—root, stem, leaves, &c.—and find fitting language to describe the results of their observations, whilst the functions of these members and the processes by which their functions are discharged might with advantage be left for the upper classes to deal with. It is not unusual to find the structure of the flower studied with some fulness in the infant department or by the lower classes, occasionally indeed the function is similarly treated. We have grave doubts as to the wisdom of this selection; for quite apart from the difficulty, not to say irksomeness, which little children must experience in remembering long and unfamiliar terms, the questions involved and processes discussed are beyond the intelligence-level of this stage of school life. As the result of some experience we think it better to defer consideration of the functions of plant organs, except the most elementary and obvious, until the higher classes are reached.

Towards the middle of the year an instructor in agriculture was appointed, who since then has held weekly classes for teachers, and in other ways has been directing the work of rural science. We strongly recommend all teachers, the conditions of whose schools render the work possible, to take advantage of the instruction being given, and enter on a course of cottage gardening. This after all is only a more practical application of nature study, and one, moreover, which should in all cases either follow or attend the work done indoors. Sole-charge teachers need not be deterred by the thought of long and troublesome classes of instruction. The notes on agriculture issued by the Board set forth the kind of work which might be undertaken by the upper classes, and are intended to indicate the range of the subject rather than the amount to be done each year. This, as well as the details of the course, will probably vary with the school.

HEALTH.—Some misconception still exists as to the requirements of the syllabus in this direction. Lessons on health are compulsory in all schools in classes Standards III to VI, though the programmes of work will necessarily vary with the conditions under which the school-work is carried on. In the larger schools a short course in each class should be worked through from year to year, whilst in the smaller centres the subject-matter of the reading-books and the natural progress of school life will supply opportunities for the required instruction, which need not necessarily be of a formal character. In a few schools physiology was presented as the additional subject, furnishing a training in elementary scientific method in compliance with clause 33 of the Regulations for Inspection and Examination of Schools. This arrangement cannot be accepted as satisfactory unless the subject be treated in a much more practical and realistic way than that which usually—indeed invariably—obtains. During the past year a good deal of attention has been given to physical education, teachers more and more concerning themselves with the rational type of physical training which aims at "the increasing of human vitality under the guidance of scientific knowledge." Breathing exercises, having due regard to physiological conditions, now form a part of the programmes of an increasingly large number of schools, and sets of physical exercises with some definite end in view are gone through at regular intervals in practically all schools.

MANUAL TRAINING.—In this necessary part of the school curriculum, which has attained such prominence in other countries and in other New Zealand centres, we hope to see a considerable advance during the forthcoming year. We refer more particularly to the work of the upper classes in woodwork, cookery, and cottage gardening. It seemed so highly desirable that all pupils in Standards VI and V should receive training in one or other of these subjects when conditions render their introduction possible, that the Board, in addition to an instructor in agriculture, has appointed Mr. J. H. Howell, Director of Technical Education in this city, to organize and direct the woodwork and cookery classes, and we have every confidence that under his able guidance the movement will make substantial and satisfactory progress. It is hoped that before the close of the present year there will be in operation a sufficient number of training centres to enable all pupils in the two upper classes of the city and