

No. 4.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION IN THE SEVERAL EDUCATION DISTRICTS.

AUCKLAND.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE EDUCATION BOARD.

The report of the Director shows that no less a number than 1,150 students were in attendance at the Auckland Technical College during the year. A day-school for boys and girls has been established, with an attendance of 170. The three manual-training schools at Auckland, and those at Thames and Whangarei, have provided instruction in cookery and woodwork for the boys and girls of the upper standards of the primary schools. Instruction in brush drawing or other hand-work has been given in 231 schools. Systematic instruction in agriculture and nature-study has been given in ninety schools, and classes for the instruction of teachers have been held in various centres. The new Technical College, when erected, will provide ample accommodation for the classes which are now suffering from the disadvantage of inadequate accommodation.

Technical and Continuation Classes have been established at the larger centres of population, and classes for the technical training of teachers have been held at Auckland, Thames, and Whangarei.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS.

In the upper classes of the larger schools suitable lessons of an illustrative and experimental character are given in elementary science; elsewhere nature-study and elementary agriculture are taken up. In the two latter, accurate notes of observations and of experiments and of practical work must be considered indispensable, and illustrative drawings and sketches should be made. As far as possible these should be the original work of the pupils. It is a good plan to place the notes on the right-hand page, and the sketches, with needful explanations, on the opposite page. Mr. Grierson remarks that nature-study is not sufficiently practical. "I have little hope of improvement in this matter with the present generation of teachers, who have little idea how to study nature themselves." Mr. Garrard finds nature-study "well taught," and remarks that "teachers are sparing no effort to make the teaching instructive and interesting." Mr. Purdie, while noting considerable improvement in nature-study, considers that school gardening is not proving successful, and Mr. Stewart takes much the same view. "The aim of the school garden," the latter says, "is misunderstood. In a number of cases a small school garden is attached to the school, and, valuable as it is in cultivating a love of flowers, it does not do the work a school garden should. The school garden should be the laboratory in which by experiments the children verify and supplement the knowledge of plant-life given in the schoolroom. The results there obtained will be by far the most valuable part of the instruction. In most of the smaller country schools the garden is either conspicuous by its absence, or else it is in a neglected condition. 'The School Garden,' by J. E. Hennessey (Blackie and Son; 1s.) is an excellent little manual that would be of great assistance to teachers taking up this subject. In every case drawing should be correlated with nature-study. The greatest mistake made by the majority of teachers is attempting to cover too much ground. In endeavouring to overtake the work planned they abandon the observational method, which gives the subject its real value."

Certain kindergarten exercises form a prominent feature in the training of the younger pupils. Paper-folding is very commonly taught, and the manipulation is very satisfactory, but it is seldom sufficiently correlated with drawing, which should be its invariable complement, and it is turned to little account for giving practice in oral expression.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

Handwork in the Primary Schools.—It is generally conceded that the backbone of the educational system of New Zealand is the primary school, and the backbone of the primary school is certainly the teacher. In the Auckland District in 1907 there were 484 primary schools (including half-time schools) under the control of the Board, and engaged in these schools were 947 teachers. It is universally recognised that to arouse interest one must promote activity: that "to do is to know." That the way to learn is to learn by doing was not discovered by Froebel is true, but he it was who most clearly insisted on the accuracy of this principle. This doctrine has been undoubtedly responsible for the growth of laboratory methods of teaching, which, commencing in the kindergarten and the technical schools, have invaded even the most conservative colleges, and are sweeping up through the primary and down through the secondary, even into the grammar schools. If, in teaching a child, one can make him actually do something himself—can guide him to create something really his own—then one has found a means surer than any other of arousing dormant and holding vagrant faculties, has opened a clear path to whatever capabilities a child may have, has established at least one point of contact between the trained individuality of the teacher and the as yet nebulous individuality of the growing child. In the old-fashioned curricula what opportunity for this important business of creativeness was offered? As a rule, but one avenue was presented—the avenue of literary creation, admittedly the most difficult of all arts. Nevertheless, the old educationalists, feeling dimly the necessity for creativeness in education, set their pupils to the work of creating, and as a result we had in schools those worse than useless "compositions" on faith, hope, or charity, and in colleges that abomination of educational desolation, the writing of Latin verse.