

Gardening Operations.—[See E.-5, Report on Manual and Technical Instruction.]

Appearance of School-grounds.—The continued and increasing interest shown in gardening operations has led in many cases to a great improvement in the appearance of school surroundings. Many teachers and members of Committees have spent time and money in a laudable endeavour to render both rooms and grounds more attractive, and to bring into the lives of pupils the educative influence of suitable environment. We note the growth of this spirit of improvement with genuine satisfaction, realizing the great and obvious benefits to be derived from daily contact with neatness, order, and pleasure-giving conditions. There are still, however, a number of teachers who fail to grasp the importance of this matter, who take but little interest in the appearance of rooms or grounds, and whose efforts in the direction of making the playground and general appearance of school buildings a real live educative factor are quite unworthy of service traditions. It is true that this at times arises from inexperience, from want of appreciation of the issues involved, from apathy of Committees and parents, and in some cases from local discouragement. Making all due allowance for such unfortunate conditions, we are still of opinion that more could and should be done in many cases, and that a little energy, tactfully applied, would gradually lead to helpful response and interested co-operation. A matter of special importance is the need in some cases for the removal of fern, tea-tree, and scrub, which have been allowed to accumulate and disfigure the grounds and become a source of real danger to fences and buildings.

Physical Culture.—During the year arrangements were made for affording teachers an opportunity of receiving a short course of instruction in this important subject. Classes were held in Auckland, Thames, Whangarei, and Hamilton, in each case for a fortnight, during which period the contributing schools were closed. The work was organized and carried out by Mr. Royd Garlick, Director of Physical Culture, and his assistants, whose tact, consideration, patience, and ability won universal approbation and helped in no small degree to dispel any feeling of uncertainty as to the general utility of the movement. On the conclusion of the courses the instructors whose services were not required elsewhere visited as many schools as possible and gave very real assistance in the application of the training received at the classes. It is proposed to continue the holding of these classes until the entire service, or as much of it as can be reached, receives some training in physical culture. During the last few years several systems of physical exercises have been introduced into other countries, differing somewhat in pedagogic principle. There is the system adopted by the London Board of Education, based mainly on the doctrine taught in Sweden, on which our own system has been largely modelled. To some extent opposed to this system are certain pursuits adopted in the American States and elsewhere, of which the folk-dance may be taken as typical, "in which the teacher pays little or no attention to the exercise of individual muscles, but supplies opportunities for aesthetic enjoyment and the expression of music." The advocates of these and other systems are enthusiastic, and it is obvious that the good teacher can secure response from pupils in any of them. The problem is to determine which system or what modification of existing systems is best calculated to assist development—i.e., to make the body a fit instrument, not merely for the maintenance of health, but "as a servant of the higher life, alike emotional and intellectual." Before concluding this paragraph we would point out to some teachers that, although enthusiasm in the cause of physical training is greatly to be commended, it is desirable that the time devoted to physical exercises should be kept within reasonable limits. From ten to fifteen minutes daily should suffice for the instruction needed, which in practically all cases should be given in the open air. The period or periods allotted to this subject, moreover, should appear on the timetable.

Training College Students.—Several years have now elapsed since the Training College commenced operations under its present management, so that we are able to estimate to some extent the success following the efforts of those responsible for the training received by students. It is with very great satisfaction we are able to bear witness to the good work done by a large proportion of ex-students, the value of their training being clearly shown in their general efficiency, in their enthusiasm for the cause, and in their attitude towards progressive ideas.

The Service.—Before closing our report, in which we have spoken somewhat freely of shortcomings, we wish it to be understood that we regard the efforts of a large proportion of our teachers in the discharge of their onerous and responsible duties as beyond all praise. An annual report, obviously, must deal largely with imperfections noted, with a view to their elimination, or with recommendations and suggestions, with a view to advancing the general welfare of the service. It is not to be supposed, however, that we do not recognize that in many of our schools highly educative work is in operation, that the general efficiency of the service is steadily rising, and that the educational outlook in this district may be regarded with hopeful anticipation.

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