

1. The psychological reason : Manual training aids in mental development. Some modern psychologists state the position much more strongly. They assert that unless suitable manual training be given between the ages of four and sixteen certain parts of the brain are only partially developed. At any rate it is undoubtedly true that a sounder mental training is secured when manual training is made to play a prominent part in the life of the child. All experience attests the fact, and the unquenchable desire of the growing child to do and make on its own account is a fact too well known to be ignored.

2. Manual training tends to develop the power of attention. "This is due partly to the pupil's interest in the work and partly to the nature of the exercises given. The correct construction of a piece of work can be accomplished only by a careful concentration of the mind upon the task." The boy who finds little to interest him in the ordinary lessons of the school becomes keen and alert in the presence of tasks in which he himself is the chief agent.

3. Manual training exercises a potent influence for good over the whole work of the school. An increased amount of attention gained in one subject is available for all the rest of the work as well, and the interest aroused in one subject may be the salvation of a pupil so far as his whole school career is concerned. This has been proved over and over again ; and it is a significant fact that manual-training exercises provide the only real avenue of approach to a very large number of our pupils. "Learn by doing" should ever be the motto of the schoolroom, and if we cannot apply it always, let us at least do so as often as we can, so that the appetite of the growing pupil for "doing" may be satisfied, and thus his interest in the school be better maintained.

So far as this district is concerned we are in respect of manual training but yet in the beginning of things. We are feeling our way with a good deal of hesitation, and often with misgivings ; but let us be assured that we have entered upon a right departure and move steadily on, trusting to the enlightenment of experience to guide us towards the best subjects and into the best means of dealing with them. Each teacher has his own problem here, and though he may be helped by others towards its solution, the solution must in the end rest with himself. Each must choose and act according to that for which he is most suited.

The great success attending the establishment of the woodwork and cookery classes at Palmerston and Hawera, and of the woodwork class at Wanganui, urges us to seek a further development of this scheme ; and we trust that before long these two subjects will become part of the course of instruction at all our centres. It is vain to hope that at some not far distant day provision for cookery and benchwork will be part of the equipment of every school, and that the training given by a suitable course in these subjects will soon be deemed as important as the learning of problems in stocks and compound interest.

We are pleased to find, especially in the larger schools, that sewing, perhaps the most important subject for girls, is being taught in a more educative manner, and that the practice of many teachers in cutting out and placing the pupils' work for them—a task that makes extraordinary and quite unnecessary demands upon the teacher—is giving way to the more rational and the only educative one of insisting that the pupils shall place and cut out for themselves. Most of our large schools are now provided with sewing-machines, and the girls in the upper classes obtain valuable practice in the use of these.

Perhaps the most important development of the work of our rural schools has been the establishment of cottage-gardens. A very large number of teachers encourage the formation of flower-borders around the school, and this is an excellent thing ; but we refer here to those gardens whose aim is to teach the elements of agriculture, and where operations are upon a much larger scale. This work was inaugurated under the provisions of the manual and technical regulations, the initial cost of tools, &c., being provided out of a special grant by the Education Department, and the upkeep maintained by a liberal capitation. It is felt on all hands that this is a step in the right direction. No more practical move has before been made. The work has been enthusiastically taken up by several teachers under the Wanganui Board ; their efforts have been supported loyally by the parents, and the pupils have taken to the new departure with great zest and interest. The great possibilities latent in this movement can scarcely be estimated, and it is to be hoped that the Minister of Education will do all he can not only to maintain the gardens already established, but furnish the means for the establishment of more. Such gardens should be part of the equipment of every rural school.

EQUIPMENT.—Under this heading we include desks, maps, charts, apparatus, pictures, &c.

Most of the schools in the district are equipped with dual desks ; in only a very few are the old long ones still to be found. The policy of the Board in removing the old high infant galleries and replacing them by dual desks is in every way commendable, and we trust that before very long every gallery will have disappeared. If any children are deserving of special consideration, surely the infants are ; the best possible equipment and the best available teachers should be given to them. Though the dual desk is a vast improvement on the old long desk, it is, nevertheless, not the best arrangement. One desk for each pupil is the ideal we should aim at ; and there is little doubt that in the near future the single desk will supersede the dual. The advantages of the former from the point of view alike of comfort and of discipline need hardly be pointed out. We have again to thank the Board for the generous manner in which they deal with our recommendations regarding maps, charts, and apparatus. During the year a great many schools received grants towards the purchase of apparatus for science-teaching. No school need be without such apparatus. Every reasonable application made during the past year received favourable consideration. We frequently hear from teachers that they have not this or that piece of apparatus, and on inquiry find that it has never been applied for. "He that asketh receiveth." It is not to be expected that the Board should supply everything. Home-made apparatus is always the most effective, and where such can be readily devised for any particular experiment it should be used. Such apparatus as barometers, thermometers, balances—necessary parts