

ABNORMAL CHILDREN.

It is a regrettable fact that there is such a large number of abnormal children in the Dominion who cannot be taught in the ordinary schools. These include the blind, the deaf, the epileptic, the crippled, the feeble-minded, the neglected, and the delinquent children. There seems to be ample scope here for the application of the maxim "Prevention is better than cure," though it is recognized that in any case there will always be an irreducible minimum. Still, it is clear that too little attention has been paid to preventive as compared with remedial measures, and it is now intended to see what can be done in the proper direction. For all the classes of children mentioned above we have special institutions, except for the epileptic and the crippled children, for whom some provision is urgently needed. In some cases more accommodation is required, but on the whole the situation is fairly well met, as will be seen from the various separate reports herein.

A special report in the form of a memorandum dealing with the industrial-school system will be appended. It will be recognized from a study of these reports that not only the Education Department but parents, churches, civic and parliamentary authorities will all need to do their share to reduce to the lowest limits this legacy of suffering which is borne by so many children in New Zealand.

EXTENSION OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

Of about fifteen thousand pupils returned as having left public schools last year, over five thousand proceeded to secondary education at district high schools, secondary schools, and technical high schools, while over two thousand were admitted to technical classes, many of the latter becoming at the same time wage-earners. These figures must be regarded as only approximately correct, but it is probably safe to assume that about half of the pupils who left the public schools last year did not continue their education. Of this number, about 75 per cent. reached the age of fourteen without having passed Standard VI, and hence left the public school without a certificate qualifying them for further free education. It is not unlikely that among this number there are many who would, if facilities for appropriate further education were placed within their reach, eventually fit themselves to enter the ranks of the industrial workers of the Dominion. The recent extension of the regulations governing free places providing for free education at classes related to industrial occupations (including agriculture and domestic occupations) of pupils leaving the public school without the recognized qualification for further free education will enable the technical schools to move in the direction indicated. These provide, *inter alia*, for the free education of recommended pupils over fourteen years of age who have left the public schools not more than six months previously without obtaining a Standard VI certificate qualifying for further free education. Pupils thus admitted must take subjects bearing upon a trade or industry, including agricultural and domestic occupations, but not including commercial subjects. An increase in the scale of payment is provided to assist the finances of technical high schools and also those of rural classes, the maintenance of which is generally more costly than that of urban classes. These new features are in the direction of making a differentiation between the test or qualification required for further admission to high schools, which will tend to give a bias towards technical and industrial training. In addition, parents whose circumstances necessitate the sending of their children out to work immediately they may leave school will be able to secure further free education for such children.

It is recognized that the proposals under consideration, which do not involve more than an extension of the present system of voluntary attendance, are but a step towards the solution of the problem of post-primary education, with particular reference to the adolescent wage-earner, and a problem which has been engaging the attention of educationists and social reformers for many years. Hitherto voluntary attendance at evening classes has for the most part been relied on, and, although large numbers of young people have undoubtedly