

INSTRUCTION IN SWIMMING.

The special vote granted in 1899, and again in 1900, for the encouragement of swimming has been rendered unnecessary by the provision in the regulations under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act for a capitation payment on account of school classes doing work in this subject. In most cases the children should be taught by the teacher of the school, and the allowance referred to should be sufficient to enable Boards to provide instruction for the teachers. Referring to this subject, and to the vote of £100 for the New Zealand Amateur Swimming Association in recognition of its efforts to foster swimming and life-saving, the association was recently informed that the Government believed that the association's enthusiasm would supply what further incentive was required for the systematic cultivation of the subject among the school-children of the colony, and desired that the grant by which the usefulness of the association was recognised might be accepted by the association as a reminder of this field for its operations.

SUPPLY OF ENSIGNS TO SCHOOLS.

On the passing of "The New Zealand Ensign Act, 1901," a vote of £1,500 was taken for the supply of ensigns to the public schools. It was thought advisable to attach two conditions to the gift: that a school before getting a flag should have a flagstaff, and that the cost of the flagstaff should not be taken out of the school fund. It was pointed out to the Boards that a 30 ft. staff was quite sufficient, and that there was no need for any Committee to go to the expense of a more elaborate equipment. The size of the presentation flag is 7 ft. 6 in. by 3 ft. 9 in. About 1,150 flags have been distributed, including eighty-six to Native schools. With each flag is sent an illustrated description of the Union Jack and its story.

RAILWAY PASSES FOR SCHOOL-CHILDREN.

In 1901 the Education Department paid the Railway Department £3,477 for this service; £1,109 of this was for the fares of children attending private schools.

CONFERENCE OF SECRETARIES OF EDUCATION BOARDS.

Owing to the great changes in the methods of administration rendered necessary by the passing of the Public-School Teachers' Salaries Act, by the rapid increase in the number of classes under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act, and by the multiplication of district high schools and the distribution of the grants for such schools, it was thought desirable to hold a conference of Secretaries of Education Boards with a view to reducing the routine work in the Department and in the various Boards' offices to the simplest form consistent with efficiency. The conference was accordingly held in Wellington in December, 1901. Questions of policy were, of course, not brought before the conference; but the methods of carrying into effect the provisions of the Acts referred to above were discussed in full detail, and the forms for securing the returns necessary to make the monthly payments to Boards on account of teachers' salaries, those for the recognition of manual and technical classes and for claims for capitation and subsidies in connection therewith, and those for the special capitation on account of secondary pupils in district high schools were agreed upon, and have since been adopted. The meetings were business-like in spirit, and much was gained by the mutual interchange of ideas on many subjects. One undoubted benefit derived from the conference was the almost perfect smoothness with which the Public-School Teachers' Salaries Act, as already stated above, was brought into operation. It is no drawback to say that subsequent experience has shown that many of the forms then agreed upon can be still further simplified.

CHATHAM ISLANDS.

In the Chatham Islands during 1901 instruction was given by three teachers and two assistants at six different centres, five on the main island and one on Pitt Island. The number on the roll at the end of the year was 86; the average