

school-gardens, the following is quoted from a master's memorandum: "Matawhero School-garden, 1905—Planted 40 lb. 'Up-to-date' potatoes. Sprayed four times, following the instructions in the Government pamphlet, by Mr. Kirk. Dug out 600 lb. of eating-potatoes, and not an unsound one in all. The boys did all the work of planting, hoeing, moulding, &c. The ground had been trenched and limed, and superphosphates had been applied when planting. Memo: Every garden in the neighbourhood was affected by the Irish blight except the school-garden." This surely is a practical way of training lads to adopt scientific methods. It is impossible for lads so trained not to appreciate the method adopted in the school-garden as against the absence of method in the home garden, and practical good must be the outcome of such training. Then, again, the Chairman of a School Committee remarked to me in a recent visit that "his son grew better tomatoes in the school-garden than he himself could grow in his own garden." But the reason was simple—the methods had been different, as in the case at Matawhero. Examples such as these are quoted to illustrate the possibilities of the school-garden in the furtherance of agricultural science where practical and competent teachers are available. The time spent in the gardens is small, and certainly does not stay the progress of the children in other directions. But skilful teachers are necessary, and if such are to become available for technical training and instruction in the more important centres, there must be pecuniary attractions provided at least equal to what are offered to teachers in the towns.

NATURE-STUDY.—Most of the schools present a list of work that has been prepared under the heading "Nature-study." The subject, interesting though it is, fails to bring out, except in a few instances, any traces of originality of treatment from teachers, either in matter or method. The school is still the place where, sitting at a desk, pupils gather information from books what others have said and done. But is the school-room alone to remain the place of instruction? Nature-study implies open grounds and fields and sunshine, where nature is at work and can be seen and studied in action, bringing about those changes without which life would cease to be. "The forests," says the poet, "were God's first temples"; and it is in field and forest, in brook and hedgerow, where inspiration can be found to study nature as well as nature's God. In three schools I had the pleasure of accompanying the senior pupils in observation studies out in the open, and no one appeared to realise that our work was for examination purposes. The children looked upon our work as a holiday, and to myself it was a source of much pleasure. The tastes of pupils were soon discovered, suggestions were made about collecting and preserving specimens, and I learnt how the studies of children were being directed by the teachers. What we want to realise in this branch of school training is the fact that the children must be given rein. Less formalism and more individual activity will give life to the study of nature. Although I am not dissatisfied with the general improvement apparent, no teacher has yet worked out a scheme of nature-study for his own district or locality under the aspects by means of which the known can be made a stepping-stone to the unknown, as pupils widen the bounds of their studies. Topography, geology, botany, zoology, and meteorology—these can all be studied and made the starting-point to a wider acquaintance with knowledge just as the study of the historical, social, and industrial aspects of a district can be made the starting-points to the study of history and the modern economic conditions of a country. If teachers would take up nature-study along the lines suggested, science would soon become a reality in the schools, and the pleasures of both teachers and children would be greatly increased.

REGULARITY OF ATTENDANCE.—It is interesting to notice the different means adopted by teachers and committees to foster regularity at school. At the Napier Main and other schools what is known as the "class board" is in operation. This is a board on which the regularity of each class is daily entered, and the class making the highest percentage of attendance for the week has the honour of keeping the board and entering the daily results. The plan is effective, and during my visit the regularity at the Main School was 97·7 per cent. of the school roll and 99·1 of the class which kept the "honour board." The School Committee of the Dannevirke North School present every pupil that makes full attendance for the year with 7s. 6d. in lieu of a book. The regularity has much improved since the plan was adopted. Pututahi grants to every pupil making full attendance a silver medal or a silver clasp. Many medals have been gained and some children may be seen on examination day wearing two or three or even four of such medals. The fostering of habits of regularity by the means described is a wise one, and will result in more good being done than is possible by the employment of the policeman. In a number of districts regular attendance at school has hardly been possible in consequence of measles and other forms of youthful ailments. One district suffered from a succession of floods that made attendance impossible unless children were able to ride. Closely connected with school attendance and regularity is the "milking problem." Sooner or later this question will come up for settlement by the State. Laws are made to regulate the employment of adults, but it would seem that laws are wanted to regulate the "school day" of children whose parents are engaged in the milking business. If eight hours a day are deemed sufficient for an adult to labour, surely less time ought to be expected from young children. Facts gathered from teachers and others go to show that many children are sadly overworked, if the time spent at school and in milking are taken into account. Whether from necessity or not cannot be stated, but it is certain that better supervision is called for on behalf of the children who are engaged by the milk-suppliers in towns and by many parents where dairy factories are established in the country.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES.—The school library is growing in popularity, and many of the larger schools possess a fair collection of readable books. Some of the teachers have expressed a desire to exchange books with other schools, but at present no arrangements are possible. It would be a good plan if the Central Department could formulate a general scheme for the easy interchange of books between the schools of the district. Next to the study of things comes the study of books, and it is encouraging to find the scope of school life widening within as well as without the walls of the schoolroom. About one-third of the schools possess a school library of over 100 volumes, whilst that of the Napier Main exceeds 500 volumes. Books treating of nature-study, for reference purposes, might easily be added to each library where funds are available. I make bold to say that no money in the improvement of education would be better spent than in the purchase of books to form a teacher's educational outfit in every town and country school. The limitation of a teacher's reading to the mere perusal of text-