

all the questions of its construction with a view to its efficient and economical use; and the instruction accordingly embraces so much more than what would seem to be implied in a mere course of drawing, that one goes away with the feeling that the Swiss or German may be right after all.

SCHOOL HOURS.

A slight study of the programmes sketched out above at once directs attention to the amount of time spent in school in countries on the Continent of Europe. In the primary schools of Geneva and Switzerland generally the hours of instruction are 30 per week during the whole of the six-year course; in the *Bürgerschulen* of Frankfurt the hours for boys begin with 20 per week in the lowest class (Class VIII, six years of age) increasing to 24 hours in the sixth (VI, eight years of age), 30 in the fifth and fourth, 31 in the third, and 33 or 34 in the second and first (II and I, twelve to fourteen years of age). During the last five years of the primary-school course the average duration of school is 31 hours per week for boys and 30.4 hours per week for girls. The great length of school hours is a feature of the secondary schools also. In the *Erste Realschule* of Berlin the hours vary from 30 to 37 per week, the highest classes having only 30 hours in school, but, on the other hand, their home work is very heavy. In the *Collège de Genève* we find 33 hours per week in all sections in the upper division of the school, but only 26 hours per week in the three classes of the lower division. In the lower division of the Girls' High School we again find 26 hours per week allotted, but in the upper division this is increased to 28 or 30 hours.

In German secondary schools the hours are generally more than in Swiss schools, but about seven years ago there was a movement in Frankfurt to reduce the school hours by a substantial amount, in consequence of serious medical reports to the effect that the health of the youth of the city was suffering considerably from overwork in school. In the secondary schools of Rome the time varies from 30 to 32 hours per week, with a substantial amount of home work. In the Italian primary schools, however, the hours are shorter, being approximately the same as in New Zealand. In England the hours in secondary schools vary considerably; in boys' schools they generally reach 27 or 28 hours at least, but are considerably less in most girls' secondary schools, which indeed in many cases are held in the morning only, the work, if any, done in the afternoon being not class-work but preparation for the next day, by pupils whose parents prefer that their daughters should do such work at school rather than at home.

I took some pains to observe whether there were any signs of fatigue in the pupils in certain German schools where the hours were long, and came to the conclusion that the evidence of mental fatigue was unmistakable in a large number of cases, although general restlessness, one of the first signs that would be displayed by a class of British boys, did not make itself apparent in a class of German boys, either because they are naturally more docile, or because they are better drilled to habits of implicit obedience and attention. On one occasion, when the class was taking a lesson in English at the end of a long morning (five hours without any long rest), I noted that 60 or 70 per cent. of the class (twenty-five or more out of forty) were so tired out that their work was purely mechanical. Again and again, moreover, I thought I observed signs of fatigue in the teachers, a symptom not unknown in other parts of the world. That being so, I am not inclined to recommend any substantial increase of school hours in New Zealand schools. For the present I leave unanswered the query how we are to include in our programme some of the useful work done elsewhere without increasing the length of the school day. America may have something to say to us on this question.

EDUCATION IN ITALY.

In Italy the elementary schools are under the control of the municipalities, which find most of the money required for their maintenance, the State's contribution being in general only about one-twentieth of the total cost, although a somewhat larger proportion is given in the case of poor and small communities. The standard of education varies considerably, especially in the country districts, being so far as they are concerned much better in the north of Italy than in the south. The schools in the larger cities, such as Rome, Florence, and Milan, are generally very good; many of the ideas current in Germany, France, and Switzerland have been adopted, and some, at least, of the work is not inferior to that done in the best schools in those countries. This is especially true of the teaching of the mother-tongue.

The schools maintained by the Corporation of Rome are the maternal schools or kindergartens, and the primary or public elementary schools. One of these, in which I spent a day, the *Scuola Regina Elena*, is a new