

In the infants' and lower department of our better schools drawing of simple objects and natural forms, with memory and imaginative drawing with chalk, pencil, and brush, testify as much to the intelligent interest aroused as to the skill and success of the teacher. Model and nature drawing, conventional ornament and design—the latter in combination with mechanical drawing and drawing to scale—are being taught with considerable success in the higher classes of many of our schools.

NATURE-STUDY AND AGRICULTURE.—We can speak in terms of warm commendation of the advance made in the teaching of nature-study in many of the schools in this district. There is a strong endeavour to teach correct and careful methods of observation, leading up to the exercise of judgment and reasoning to reach certain conclusions. Some of the courses submitted are needlessly elaborate, and we would suggest that in such cases a shorter programme, with more opportunity for observation, would give better and more lasting results. The children should be active workers, and not mere passive recipients. A spirit of independent effort can be cultivated, and the child induced to become an earnest seeker after knowledge. Occasionally we find that the periods assigned to nature-study have been devoted to purely botanical lessons, and the immature minds of young children have been loaded with technical terms that serve no good purpose at this stage, and often deaden the interest. It should be borne in mind that nature-study is not necessarily confined to the study of flowers and leaves, but may embrace "acquaintanceship with the earth and the sky, with the hill and the valley, with the river and lake, . . . with the birds and the insects, with animals, and with man."

Closely allied with nature-study is agriculture; indeed, much of the teaching and observation connected with the former subject should lay a sound foundation for instruction in the latter. During the year there has been a further advance in the treatment of agriculture in several of our schools. The tact and enthusiasm of Mr. Malcolm, the Board's instructor, has roused a renewed and more extended interest in this subject, and the attendance at Saturday lectures and the summer school shows that a considerable number of teachers are manifesting an active interest in the work. Of the importance of agriculture in this district there is no need to speak. It cannot be expected that fully equipped farmers can be turned out of our primary schools, but valuable training can be given in habits of careful observation, and much useful information (associated, as far as possible, with experiment) about soils, cultivation, and general farming operations can be imparted. "The children will also realize that work on the farm need not be all drudgery, that there is plenty of scope for intelligence; and, further, that there is a dignity about agriculture that has not been too widely recognized." In the arrangement and work of the school gardens teachers have received valuable direction and assistance from Mr. Moodie, the assistant instructor.

HISTORY.—This subject is dealt with in many of our schools by means of Historical Readers, which have been employed with the more successful results where direct instruction on the matter to be read has preceded such reading. In many of the courses presented in this subject the lessons are too detached, with but little regard to their continuity or connection, and so the story of the nation as a continuous growth is not realized. Instruction in the duties of citizenship has occupied a prominent position in most of the schemes submitted. The interesting series of lessons supplied by the New Zealand edition of the *Citizen Reader* and the *School Journal* have been used with highly satisfactory results.

SINGING.—In most of the larger and in several of the smaller schools singing forms a very pleasing feature of the school work. Too often, however, insufficient importance is attached to the opportunities afforded by the singing lesson as a natural means of expression, and as a healthy and attractive recreation. Especially in the lower classes, wherever the school arrangements permit, the rendering of bright and cheerful songs should form a pleasing feature of the daily routine.

HEALTH.—Instruction in this important subject is provided for more or less in practically all the schemes of work brought under our notice. The response given to the tests occasionally applied shows that much valuable knowledge is being assimilated that cannot fail to be of service to the individual and the community. Daily practice in physical exercises in the open air is given in the majority of our schools. The result is apparent in the improved carriage of many of the pupils, while their teachers often testify to the benefit they derive from participating in the class movements. More attention may profitably be bestowed on the correction of careless attitudes and ungainly postures at the school-desks, more, especially when the pupils are engaged in writing.

NEEDLEWORK.—This subject has received, on the whole, its fair share of attention. The stimulating effect of local interest is apparent where prizes have been awarded on the result of examinations conducted by a committee of ladies at the close of the school year. Special credit is due to those mistresses of city schools who have claimed no exemption from needlework for their senior pupils who during school hours have attended central classes in domestic instruction.

REVISION.—The method of inspection adopted in this district makes revision especially important, and the majority of our teachers thoroughly recognize its value as a factor of success. A few, however, are content with the recapitulation of the subject-matter by the teacher, and fail to give the child the opportunity of revealing its individuality. To such, inspection-day is associated with disappointment, for the neglect of oral examination and of encouraged free response has left them in ignorance of the shortcomings of their pupils. No matter how well the lesson may be planned or delivered, there still remains the necessity for "driving home" the important points. Newer educational methods are so prolific in means of assistance that there is danger of sapping independence, and of presenting pupils lacking that vigour and self-reliance