

TESTING FOR MENTALITY.

In Canada, and also in the United States, a good deal is done in the way of estimating mental ability by means of "intelligence tests." Practically all city Education Boards employ one or more psychologists who supervise this mental testing, and the results are made use of in classifying the pupils in school. I was assured again and again that this mental testing, taken in conjunction with the results of examinations in ordinary school-work, affords the most satisfactory method of classifying school-children; and, furthermore, that the mental tests frequently reveal, in different pupils, a mentality higher than had been previously recognized by the teacher.

Where junior high schools are established it is usual for pupils in the Sixth Grades of the elementary schools to be given the "national intelligence test," or the "Terman group test," before they leave to enter the secondary school. The results of these tests, together with the teacher's rating and all other available data, are used as a basis for placing the pupils in one or other of the several divisions of the Seventh Grade at the junior high school. Those with the highest score (other factors, such as good health, hearty home co-operation, and earnestness of purpose, being equal) are placed in the top division of the Seventh Grade, and are given the opportunity to accomplish the work of three terms in two. In this way an endeavour is made to place all pupils according to ability and individual need.

METHODS OF DEALING WITH RETARDATEES.

The provision made in Toronto for dealing with the mentally backward is typical of what is done in most of the places that I visited. There, on the advice of the teacher in charge, the mentally backward—possibly 3 per cent. of those on the school roll—are selected for examination by the school psychiatrist (a psychiatrist is a medical man who has had a special training in child psychology, and who advises from the remedial point of view), and, as a rule, some two-thirds of the children nominated by the teachers are selected for special treatment. These are children who will never develop beyond the mental age of twelve. They are then placed in special classes, under the care of special teachers, in their own schools, and are put through courses consisting very largely of manual work. These special classes never exceed sixteen in number.

At Los Angeles they select the children who are backward in a particular subject, and those who have dropped behind the rest owing to irregular attendance, &c., and place them under a special teacher for a time. As this teacher does not take more than about sixteen pupils at a time, she is able to give plenty of individual attention to each, with the result that they are soon brought up to normal. I was told that it was no unusual thing for one of these special teachers, in a large city school, to deal in this way with as many as one hundred pupils in the course of the year.

PLAYGROUND ACTIVITIES.

Many of the city schools in Canada and in the United States are badly provided for in the way of playgrounds, though this deficiency is made up to some extent by the gymnasiums. The teachers do as much as is possible in the way of directing organized play in the school-grounds, but the towns themselves do a great deal in this direction by providing public playgrounds and appointing supervisors to take charge of them. Toronto, for instance, is spending this year 125,000 dollars (= £30,000) on organized play for the boys and girls of the city. They have a number of city grounds, and through the summer holidays they also make use of the school playgrounds. They have a corps of about sixty-five supervisors and directors of play, and they also have about twenty pianists who play for the folk-dancing, &c.

Besides the city playgrounds, some of which are fitted up with apparatus much the same as that provided by Mr. John Court for Victoria Park in Auckland, there are several "centres" where there are buildings which are open of an evening. Here the boys and the girls of the neighbourhood meet on alternate evenings; they have games and amusements, but also a certain amount of instruction in handwork, &c. In connection with these "centres" there is usually a large room in which the parents from the neighbourhood can meet for community purposes. Most of the cities that I visited in the United States are conducting play activities for the children on lines similar to those followed in Toronto.

SELF-GOVERNMENT.

I made many inquiries for elementary schools conducted on "self-government" lines, but was not able to hear of any. There is, of course, a certain amount of responsibility placed upon monitors and prefects, but no more than there is in many New Zealand schools.

Self-government in the High Schools.—While I did not see much evidence of self-government in the class-rooms, I was very favourably impressed with what is done in this direction in the playing-fields. In many schools practically the whole responsibility for the maintenance of order and good conduct in the playground is thrown upon the pupils. The usual procedure is for the scholars to elect a head prefect, captain, or president, who in turn selects his "executive" from among his fellows, and this executive is frequently strengthened by a representative elected by each grade or form. This body then assumes responsibility for the management of the playground activities, and for the preservation of order and good conduct outside the school-walls. As many of the high schools are very large—numbering up to two thousand five hundred and even three thousand pupils—it will be readily understood that this system of self-government does much to develop in the pupils a sense of responsibility and of self-reliance. The system certainly helps to develop good citizenship.

In Montclair, N.J., the high-school prefects are recognized by the city. They are given badges, and are encouraged to exercise an influence over the pupils of their schools in the streets, to assist the aged and the young in crossing the streets, &c.