

## CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION.

Under the present system of central manual-training centres the special teachers of woodwork, metalwork, and domestic subjects are for the most part isolated, and they are therefore at some disadvantage with respect to a proper correlation with the general work of the schools from which their classes are drawn. In view of such a disadvantage it is surprising to find how few are the exceptions to a very high standard of keenness in work and faithfulness to duty. Practical education of the kind undertaken at the centres has a very strong natural appeal for the pupils, and it is largely due to the high enthusiasm displayed by the children that the teachers maintain a corresponding interest in work which might otherwise become distasteful because of its monotony. Moreover, there is some indication that the teachers are gaining a wider conception of the value of their subjects with respect to the influence of the training upon the general education of the child; unfortunately, however, the conditions, particularly the factor of separation, are not favourable to a full development in this direction, but it is hoped that the definite directions laid down in the Department's new syllabus with regard to co-operation along certain lines will serve to bring the specialist instructor into closer touch with the general staff. In the past the conduct of the work at the centre has been too formal in its nature, and too limited in its scope, with a tendency to follow trade procedure rather than to consider the special educational possibilities. When the ideal arrangement is realized, and every school of any considerable size has its own practical room, and perhaps its "literary morning and manual afternoon," the specialist teacher, as a member of the staff, will be much better placed. In our junior high schools the conditions have moved towards the ideal, for there the specialist is one of the staff, a fair allowance of time is given to the practical side, and suitable articulation is arranged for. The attention given to manual training in high schools continues to increase, but it is found that the necessity for allocating sufficiently long periods to practical work has not always been fully understood; in general, the pupils should be given at least two hours for any one practical lesson, and if manual work is to be considered of any importance at all it should at least be worth the slight inconvenience caused by some little dislocation of the time-table.

## HANDWORK AND MANUAL TRAINING IN THE SCHOOLS.

The practical work in elementary agriculture, dairy science, and general science taken by the higher classes of primary and district high schools is for general purposes designated manual training. It is conducted under the supervision of itinerant agricultural instructors in the employ of the Education Boards. In 1928, as in the previous year, there were twenty-three instructors, distributed throughout the education districts as follows: Auckland, 4; Taranaki, 3; Wanganui, 3; Hawke's Bay, 2; Wellington, 3; Nelson, 1; Canterbury, 3; Otago, 3; Southland, 1. The supervising instructors give particular attention to the secondary departments of district high schools, and in a more general way direct the work on their side in the higher classes of the primary schools. In some districts they are required also to assist the teachers of lower classes with respect to nature-study generally. Their advice is eagerly sought by teachers and School Committees in laying out or making improvements in the school-grounds. Under the guidance of some of the instructors forestry on a comparatively large scale is becoming an important feature in connection with the work of their schools; and the majority take a large share in organizing and directing such out-of-school activities as those connected with home-garden and calf-rearing competitions, and boys' and girls' agricultural-club work.

For the purposes of handwork-training taken by classes which do not attend manual-training centres the Department continues to supply material to the Boards for distribution to the schools. The total cost for the year, including all incidental charges, was approximately £10,400. Included in this amount is the cost of a special supply for use in preparatory classes, where handwork now takes a predominant place as an instrument of general education. Experimental investigations are being made with a view to ascertaining to what extent light woodwork might be taken with advantage as a desk occupation in small country schools that are not within reach of manual-training centres. The proposal is to issue a small set of tools and workboards to selected teachers considered capable of handling this branch of handwork with sufficient skill to make it a valuable addition to the teaching-aids employed in developing both manual ability and intellectual acuity, but no definite steps will be taken until the investigations now in progress have been completed.

In the special classes established for the better handling of retarded children manual activity is the main foundation upon which such education as is possible is based. For the use of these classes various kinds of equipment have been provided, and year by year supplies of suitable material are sent out. Such of the older pupils as are considered capable of attempting advanced work attend manual-training centres, if these should be within convenient reach.