

## SOME ASPECTS OF MANUAL TRAINING

By Arthur Beech.

In the manual training room there are several features that are absent in the ordinary classroom and consequently the conduct and management are on different lines.

There is an atmosphere of freedom that is very attractive to the manual training boy; he feels he can move around and does not see the necessity of keeping quiet as he does in his ordinary classroom. This fact brings one of the greatest difficulties a manual training teacher has to contend with, and that is how to minimize the talking in the manual training room. I do not believe that it is desirable to prohibit talking, because it is impossible to prevent it. There are so many legitimate opportunities for a boy to speak to his neighbors that to prohibit it entirely would lead to greater difficulties than its sufferance brings about. It should, of course, be reduced to the lowest minimum. We have to distinguish between talking about the work and the talking of outside subjects. Often I find the talking results from the pleasure they feel in the work, and they are discussing how far they have advanced and what they are going to do next.

Whistling is very often done unconsciously and is an outlet of feeling from the boy who is deeply interested in his work.

Many times we misjudge the mental attitude of a boy and think that he is not trying, when possibly his very awkward manner may be due to nervous agitation. I had a boy of this character who was always getting into trouble. Apparently through carelessness he spoiled everything he started to make, and I had almost lost patience with him. I told him in a grieved voice I would give him another chance. I said, "Cut a new piece and don't spoil it this time." As he turned away I heard him say to himself, "I'll kill myself if I do." I saw he was serious, though I knew he would not commit suicide. I gave him a little extra attention, and he made good on that model and has done better work since.

Occasionally a boy will go the wrong way. I had one who did good work and his conduct was exemplary, and then a gradual change took place in him. He became less attentive and his work deteriorated very rapidly. I thought, here is a case that needs attention. I found it was due to the influence of companions outside. I took him aside and told him I was very sorry he was not as good a manual training boy as he used to be, and asked him to remember certain models he had made that were really good, and how it was he was not doing as well now. He said he did not know, but the recollection of the models he had made had a big effect and he set to work and worked hard all that afternoon. His case is still undecided, but I believe he will come back.

I give these instances to show that the mental attitude has very direct bearing upon

the work in the manual training room. Many of those whom we call lazy boys are of a passive nature, their desire soul is small, so the incentive to work is lacking.

This type is very difficult to deal with and exasperates the active teacher. I think persistent prodding, with an endeavor to create a desire for something is the best corrective. There is of course the opposite type, he desires models but does not like exertion. He is the real lazy boy. His desire soul may be large enough to tempt him to appropriate other boys' models, but to work for them does not appeal to him. He belongs to those who become social parasites if their tendencies are not checked. It is gratifying to know there are few of this type. There are other types of boys, the dreamers, the mischievous, the discontented, the selfish, and so on, each having their own particular psychology for the study of the teacher.

Most manual training teachers will have noticed that each class has a character of its own. One will be noisy, another restless, another enthusiastic and occasionally one that is all that can be desired and give us joy in handling. The psychology of a class is more or less regular and does not change rapidly, although each class has its moods that raises or lowers the pitch of psychological expression, and the observant teacher can detect the changing mood just as he can detect the slightest variation from the usual noise in the room, whether it is the tapping on the bench with a square or the jingling of a rule against the plane. There are two attitudes a teacher may assume. One of complete dominance, he may be a thorough autocrat, compelling strict obedience to a cast iron system he has created. Or he may adopt, which is a more scientific attitude, that of changing methods to suit the psychology of the class he happens to have at the time. For instance, a class will come and show they have come to work, although he may have planned a variation of the work owing to the state of the class the week before. Shall he conform to the psychological attitude of the class or insist that his own plan be adhered to in spite of that attitude? Often it is wise to humor the class and indirectly draw them towards the plan he has in mind. The mental state existing in a room has a direct bearing upon the presentation of the subject, the imparting of knowledge and the supervision of the work. It is just as important to choose the right moment to demonstrate as it is to have the matter well in hand, and the time to demonstrate in the manual training room is when the teacher realizes that the calling of the boys from their work will disturb the least the receptibility of their minds toward the demonstration. Very often we are disappointed at the immediate results of our demonstrations. They seem to be of less value than we expect, but we must re-