

Manual Training—Its Place in the Public Schools.

(Under the Direction of the M. T. T. Association of Nova Scotia)

By A. H. MacKAY, LL. D.

At a very short notice, during a very busy week, I am asked to answer the question involved in the headline above; and the editor confines me to the limit of a page on account of the space already engaged for the October issue. I therefore briefly make the following notes:

Public school routine work may be conceived as divisible into two categories, (1) mental training, and (2) manual training. For full mind development there must be a corresponding development of the body through which the mind manifests itself. As the hand is the chief working organ of the body, manual or hand training is well taken as the general term for such education, which in its widest scope includes all bodily habits as well as the control of the muscles of the hand in exact obedience to the correct conceptions of the trained mind. Experience has amply proved, what might be readily inferred, that apart from the practical utility of manual training, its simultaneous progression with mental training aids powerfully the soundest and most effective mind culture; and in some cases it appears to be the only effective introduction to any mind culture possible.

As the mental training given in the public schools is not especially adapted to any one, as against the other, of the numerous professions or occupations necessary, so the manual training work is not intended for the benefit of any class of people or specific kinds of employment, although the limitations of economical school work may confine us to the use of materials suggesting the introductory stages of certain trade or technical schools.

The manual training of our public schools under present conditions is not intended to be specialized into trade schools, or even into the more generalized technical schools. It is intended merely to prepare our young people to enter directly into employments not requiring difficult specialized skill, or into professional schools such as medical, theological, law, business, agricultural, engineering, technical and other colleges; or into trade schools in which a special muscular habit has to be developed so as to become precise, rapid and semi-automatic; or into apprenticeships. It is valuable, also, for the student who is to take a university course.

The manual training subjects already introduced,

or authorized to be introduced into all our schools as far as possible, are briefly as follows:

Writing, introduced on account of its utility for correspondence and record, is also useful in training the muscles of the (with us) right hand into a definite habit of controlled motion.

Drawing, introduced mainly on account of its adaptation to the development of the more varied control of the muscles of the hand, so as to enable it to execute the idea clearly defined in the mind with precision. It thus shortens the training course of those entering any trade school or trade requiring manual deftness. But both the freehand and the mechanical drawing of our course have also very great directly utilitarian advantages sufficient, as in the case of writing, to justify their introduction into every school.

The generally recognized *kindergarten* work of our schools is the ideal for the primary grade. This ideal should, however, be carried through all the higher grades; only the character of the manual work should be correspondingly advanced. *Clay-modeling*, *cardboard work*, *Sloyd wood work*, *sewing*, *knitting*, and *school-gardening* have already been tried in many schools with success. School boards and teachers are not only allowed, but are recommended to introduce them wherever the conditions allow of their proper co-ordination with the other essential subjects of the school course.

Domestic Science is the term used in Nova Scotia to denote a group of subjects involving mental as well as manual training, all of them of prime importance in every household. A provincial grant of \$300 can be earned by a school which has the prescribed equipment and a sufficient number of pupils—about fifty—above grade V of the public school course. These conditions, however, confine such courses to the larger centres of population—to town and city school sections mainly.

Mechanic Science is the term used to denote a group of tool-using arts, similarly conditioned as domestic science, except that the grant may reach \$600, provided the pupils are about one hundred. The work has hitherto been confined mainly to wood work and the necessary drawing and the cognate natural history. But it is expected to develop in the more favorable localities into metal work, etc., especially when a number of the pupils have completed the present regular courses. The new and more advanced work will be undertaken by those who have previously passed through the more elementary work, which as it does not begin until the pupil is in grade VI, may be undertaken when the