No. 2.

REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS OF MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

SIR,—

We have the honour to report as follows as to the state and progress of manual and technical instruction in the Dominion during the year ending 31st December, 1910.

A. MANUAL INSTRUCTION.

Instruction in one or more branches of elementary handwork was given in about 63 per cent. of the primary schools during the year. In classes up to and including Standard IV the branches of handwork usually taken up are paper-work, modelling, brush drawing, free-arm and blackboard drawing. Teachers generally appear to have a more rational conception of the place and value of handwork, and to be treating it in a more consistent and progressive way than formerly. The formidable programmes of many and varied branches of handwork that were in vogue a few years ago are giving place to well-considered graded courses, connected as closely as may be with other subjects of the school syllabus. In an increasing number of schools handwork is treated as a method rather than as a subject of instruction.

In the higher standards and in the secondary departments of district high schools the branches usually taken up include elementary design and colour work, cardboard-work, wood and iron work, physical measurements, agriculture, dairying, cookery, and dressmaking. The opportunity is here taken to impress on those concerned in the drawing-up of schemes of work the importance of adapting them to the needs of the school, of utilizing the aptitudes and qualifications of the staff to the best advantage, and especially of seeing that the subjects selected for the lower classes are not treated independently of their natural relation to other branches of school-work, and, further, that they are progressive, and consistent with and preparatory to the subjects taken in the higher classes.

Increasing attention continues to be given to instruction in elementary agriculture. In two or three districts elementary dairy-work is also being taught, with, in most cases, a good deal of success. The instruction in most districts is, as in former years, under the supervision of itinerant instructors. There is evidence of a clearer realization on the part of teachers of the value of elementary work bearing on plant-life. The experimental work in connection with special plots and the indoor work dealing with such topics as seed-selection, germination, properties of soils, &c., are generally on right lines and systematically carried out, while the pupils' note-books are in many cases well kept. In some few cases the practice of dictating notes is still followed. This method of note-taking should be avoided as far as possible. The note-books should contain the pupils' own records of their own work. In quite a number of schools the school garden now plays a not unimportant part in the school course as an instrument of education. The winning of prizes at agricultural shows for specially grown flowers and vegetables is no longer in the majority of cases the main object of school gardening. This is due partly to a much-needed revision, in the light of experience, of the conditions governing prize competitions, and also to the recognition by teachers of the fact that there are other things more worth while than the growing of horticultural specimens for purely show purposes. For example, instances are not lacking where the results of school experiments have not only attracted the attention of farmers, but have helped to solve some of the many problems that beset the agriculturist. The instruction in dairy-work is practically confined to the examination and testing of milk. Pupils generally take a keen interest in this branch of agricultural instruction, and some excellent results of local economic value have been obtained. A rural course on the lines indicated in last year's report was taken by pupils of the secondary departments of several of the district high schools during the year. The various schemes, though tentative in character, have been attended with a good deal of success, which augurs well for the future. It is gratifying to note that the movement is spreading, and it is probable that this year (1911) will see a considerable increase in the number of district high schools providing a course of secondary instruction having a distinct rural bias. A good secondary education cannot fail to broaden the intellectual outlook; but, to quote from a recent memorandum of the English Board of Education dealing with the question of rural education, "Rural education demands more than this—it demands that the science-teaching given to the pupils shall in their after-life illuminate their farming practice, enable them to follow intelligently scientific progress as recorded in the agricultural journals, notice and take advantage of new scientific developments, and take up with the fullest profit courses of technical instruction in agriculture at the farm school or agricultural college."

Cookery, dressmaking, and laundry-work, in that order, continue to be the branches of domestic economy most generally taken up in the schools. As regards cookery, more attention is being given to principles than heretofore, and to the necessity for neatness, tidiness, and cleanliness in connection with all culinary work. Speaking generally, there has been a marked improvement in methods of instruction, and in not a few cases the preparation of dishes has ceased to be the main object in view. Most young girls are familiar with kitchen craft, they know something of the processes of boiling and baking, of grilling and frying; but they are not so familiar with the rationale of these processes. Such topics as the physiology of digestion and the elementary chemistry and physics of food and of culinary operations in general should therefore figure prominently in the course of instruction. It is gratifying to note that in many cases teachers of cookery are endeavouring to qualify themselves to give this wider instruction. The full courses in home science and home economics recently established at the Otago University