

In addition to the rural science course in operation in the district high schools, elementary agricultural instruction has been carried on in 189 schools under the supervision of the Board's instructors, the average attendance being 2,401. The work in these schools has generally been of a very satisfactory character. In view of the opportunity which the school-garden offers for developing an intelligent and sympathetic interest in nature and the elementary principles of agriculture, it is gratifying to record that it is now rather the exception to find a rural school without its adjoining cultivated plot.

Further generous donations by the Agricultural and Pastoral Association, Messrs. McSkimming and Son, and Messrs. Skene and Fleming enabled the Board to continue last year the competitions previously inaugurated. These competitions have undoubtedly proved a stimulating factor, which in itself amply justifies their continuance. During the year approximately five thousand trees and native shrubs, raised by the Training College agriculture class, were distributed to some fifty schools. With a similar number available each succeeding year it is confidently anticipated that a material improvement will be effected in the appearance of the school-grounds throughout the district.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

Manual instruction in various forms is carried on in all schools in this district, and in an increasing number of schools the tendency to regard it as an isolated branch of school-work is gradually disappearing. In the preparatory division paper-folding, paper-weaving, modelling, and stick-laying are the subjects mainly selected; in the junior division carton-work and modelling in plasticine or cardboard are chosen; in the senior classes of the city, suburban, and larger rural schools the boys take woodwork and the girls cookery and hygiene. In all these forms of handwork drawing with pencil, chalk, or brush is made use of to help in the co-ordination of hand and eye. If it is admitted that the purpose of mental training is to give (1) the habit of close observation, (2) discrimination of likenesses and differences, (3) power of correct inference, and (4) the command of language which is necessary to correct formulation, or the power to call up a clear mental image, the manual training in our schools is working steadily in this direction, though the power of verbal expression is not progressing so freely as we could desire. By means of daily talks about natural phenomena and objects that come under the notice of the pupils, especially in the preparatory and junior divisions, and by means of the garden-work carried on by the senior classes, children receive a training in habits of observation, inference, and expression that will be helpful to them in after-life, while the "knowledge" which is sometimes spoken of as mental training comes incidentally. During the year the pupils of S4 in the city and suburban schools attended the swimming classes at the Municipal Baths, with the result that during the course 681 boys and girls were taught to swim. Instruction in swimming has also been given in several country schools, but it is surprising that more rural schools have not taken up this important and necessary subject.

SOUTHLAND.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

The value of elementary handwork as an aid in the teaching of other subjects in the syllabus is now so thoroughly recognized that instruction in one or more branches was given in practically all the schools of the district, the subjects receiving most attention being plasticine-modelling in Classes P to S2, and cardboard-work in S3 and upwards. Though the tendency to treat handwork as a separate subject of instruction is now almost entirely absent, yet in the case of a few schools it was found that there was still an inclination to isolate brush drawing from the ordinary instruction in drawing, and to regard the subject as sufficient in itself to satisfy requirements in the way of handwork. Useful though brush drawing may be in developing the artistic instinct and stimulating an appreciation of beauty, it is only in so far as it is made an integral part of a general drawing scheme that the work has any real value. In a number of schools pastel-work was taken in the lower classes instead of brushwork, and the results have proved so satisfactory that this form of colour-work gives promise of becoming extensively adopted in the future. Now that cardboard-work has become the recognized form of handwork for schools that are unable to take woodwork and cookery there has been a very considerable increase in the number of pupils taking the subject, and difficulty was experienced in getting a sufficient supply of knives to satisfy all requirements. In the more specialized forms of handwork the number of schools where such subjects were taught showed an increase in the case of woodwork, cookery, and elementary agriculture. The numbers for the various subjects were as follows: Elementary agriculture, 108; woodwork and cookery, 71; physical measurements, 11; advanced needlework, 26; swimming and life-saving, 3; physiology and first-aid, 2.

As regards agriculture a very comprehensive scheme of work extending over a period of three years was drawn up by the Board's instructor. The programme of work followed during the year provided for a scheme of indoor instruction and also a scheme of practical work in the garden, the outdoor work for town schools differing in some degree from that laid down for country schools. The scheme of indoor instruction made provision for lessons and experiments in connection with plant-life, the seed, the root, the leaf, the stem, and the flower being studied. Lessons were also given bearing directly upon the practical work of the garden—*e.g.*, the preparation and treatment of the soil, and the various tools to be used. The outdoor work in the case of country schools consisted of a series of manurial tests on the four-plot system with the following crops: Beans, swedes, Drumhead cabbage, and kale. The manures experimented with