

MANUAL TRAINING AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

The steady advance in manual and technical instruction noticeable since the passing of the Manual and Technical Instruction Act in 1900 was well maintained during 1903. At the close of 1902 the number of classes recognised under the Act was 980. During 1903 1,247 additional classes were recognised, making the number at the end of the year 2,227. Of these classes 1,659 were classes for handwork in connection with primary and secondary schools, while 568 were "special," "associated," or "college" classes, providing for instruction in the various branches of pure and applied art, engineering and science, and in plumbing, carpentry and joinery, domestic economy, and commercial subjects. There is a marked increase in the number of public schools in which handwork is being taught, not only in the lower but also in the higher standards, and there is every indication that the number of such schools will be still further increased during the present year (1904). The causes of this increase are two-fold; most of the Education Boards, availing themselves of the special annual grants for the instruction of teachers in subjects of manual and technical instruction, first made in 1901 and continued up to the present time, have established training-classes which have, in general, been well attended by teachers; the revised standard regulations recently gazetted also make it possible for handwork to be taken right through the school course.

Of the various branches of handwork now being taught in the schools, cookery for girls and woodwork for boys are receiving considerable attention. In 1902 63 cookery classes and 14 woodwork classes were recognised in connection with primary and secondary schools. For 1903 the numbers were 131 and 100 respectively. Coincident with this increase is the increase in the number of teachers seeking to obtain the certificates of the City and Guilds of London Institute in cookery and woodwork.

With regard to technical classes proper, the number of towns at which classes were held during 1902 was thirty-five; during 1903 classes were held at forty towns. There appears to be an increasing desire to establish "associated" rather than "special" classes, which may be taken as an indication that Borough Councils, County Councils, and other local authorities, availing themselves of the provisions of the Act of 1902, are encouraging the establishment of technical classes. That local interest is increasing is also shown by the fact that the voluntary contributions made to technical classes during 1903 on which subsidies were paid by the Government amounted to nearly three times as much as for the previous year.

The difficulty of obtaining the services of thoroughly competent instructors continues to be felt, especially in country districts. The technical schools in the larger centres, are, however, to be looked to to remedy this as time goes on.

The regulations providing for junior technical scholarships that were gazetted in 1903 were not taken advantage of to any great extent during that year. During the present year, however, several controlling authorities have provided suitable courses of work, with the result that there are now a fair number of persons receiving free technical instruction. The object of these scholarships is to encourage those who have just left school, and adults who satisfy the conditions set forth in the regulations, to continue their education. Thus they may, first of all, as junior scholars, take a two-years course of work designed on the one hand to further their general education, and, on the other, to prepare them for special courses of work suited to the various callings they may desire to follow. Then, if they satisfy the conditions, they may as senior scholars attend for two more years special courses suited to their professions, trades, or occupations, as the case may be.

The grants for buildings, furniture, fittings, and apparatus paid during 1903 amounted to £11,752 9s. 4d.; for material, £478 14s. 6d.; capitation, £7,566 13s. 10d.; subsidies on voluntary contributions, £1,225 15s.