

their occupations,—many of the most useful exercises being only a kind of organized play, and partly by their increased interest in their work.

"We regard it also as a very significant testimony to the value of manual training, that wherever it has been once introduced, it has, with hardly an exception, been continued and extended. There has been practically no disposition to go back to the old system, which made primary education almost exclusively literary in its character; and after an experience extending over some years, there is a general consensus of managers of schools, inspectors, and parents, that the value of primary education has been greatly enhanced by the change."

#### A BASIS NEEDED FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

3. "Lastly, there is a consideration of a practical character, which seems to us deserving of no little weight. A strong desire exists throughout this country, and it is growing stronger every day, for the introduction of a general system of Technical Education. It is thought that a good system of Technical Education would contribute largely towards the development of arts and industries in Ireland; and in this opinion we entirely concur. But the present system of primary education is so one-sided in its character that it leaves the pupils quite unprepared for Technical Education. The clever boys trained in the National Schools, if they are disposed to seek for a higher education, may pass with advantage into Intermediate Schools of the kind now general in Ireland; but they are not fit to enter a Technical School, even if they had such a school at their doors. Now it seems to us the changes we recommend would go far to remedy this defect. The system of National Education, modified as we propose, would give an all-round training to the faculties of the children, and would thus lay a solid foundation for any system of higher education—literary, scientific or technical—which might afterwards be found suitable to their talents and their circumstances."

#### THE CHANGE TO BE GRADUAL.

"We think that the changes recommended ought to be introduced, not all at once, but gradually and tentatively. They should be tried first in the large centres, and afterwards extended to more remote districts. It would be necessary, at the outset, to engage the services of experts, from outside the present staff of the National Educational Board, whose duty it would be to organize the classes, and to aid the teachers with their counsel and instruction. But we have no doubt that this work, after a little time, could be taken up by the ordinary staff of the Board. Again, it is obviously important that all teachers should be trained in the new subjects; and

the programme of the training colleges must be framed to this end, with as little delay as possible."

#### CONCLUSION.

"In presenting this report to your Excellency, we venture to express our conviction that, if our recommendations be adopted, the system of education carried out in the primary schools of Ireland can be made, within a few years, very thorough and complete. At present, no doubt, it is excellent in some respects; but in other respects it seems to us seriously deficient. Insisting too much, as it does, on the study of books, it leaves the faculty of observation and other important faculties comparatively uncultivated; and it neglects almost entirely that training of the hand and eye which would be so useful to the children in their after life, and which is now regarded both in England and on the Continent of Europe as an element of great importance in primary education.

"The development of Manual and Practical Instruction, on the lines we have pointed out, will remedy these defects, and will not, we are satisfied, inflict any injury on the literary education which is now given. It will quicken the intelligence of the children, brighten the tone of school life, and make school-work generally more interesting and attractive. With the system of National Education modified as we propose, the children will be taught not by means of books only, but also by the more simple and effective agency of things; and they will be better prepared for their work in life, which, for the great bulk of them, must consist mainly of manual occupations.

"It is hardly necessary to say that the changes we have recommended cannot be carried out without a considerable expenditure of money. But we feel confident that the State, which so largely maintains and controls the system of National Education in Ireland, will not hesitate to provide the necessary funds for improving that system within reasonable limits. The progress of the people in wealth and material prosperity must largely depend on the education given in the primary schools; and to make that education thoroughly efficient and fit for its purpose is a task, we submit, which may well be undertaken, in the highest interests of the State, whatever the necessary cost may be."

I have quoted freely from that Report. I am greatly indebted to it. I consider it peerless even among Parliamentary Blue Books for the thoroughness of its information. Its statements are clear as sunshine, strong with words of wisdom, and convincing as truth itself.