

The Macdonald Sloyd System of Manual Training in Schools.

Prof. Jas. W. Robertson, Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying for the Dominion, has issued in pamphlet form the leading features which will bring to the notice of the public generally the advantages of the adoption of the teaching of the Sloyd system of Manual Training in public schools. Sir William Macdonald of Montreal, who has already given some millions of money to further higher education in Canada in McGill University, now offers to pay for the equipment required for educational manual training in one place in every province in the Dominion; and also to meet the expenses of qualified teachers, and of maintenance for three years in all those places.

Prof. Robertson in the pamphlet says:—

It is the practical application of an educational movement which, during the last ten years particularly, has won an ever-widening place in the school systems of the foremost countries in Europe and also in the United States. It is already correcting some of the school influences which have been complained of alike by parents and teachers. It has been said that the schools, where book studies are the only or chief ones, turn the children from contentment with occupations in which bodily labour plays an important part, and also incline them to leave rural homes for cities, and clerical and professional pursuits.

While much has been said and written about the danger of over-educating the rural population and thereby leading them to leave the farms, I do not think it is possible to over-educate anybody. On the other hand it is easily possible and has been quite common to over-school boys and girls, as well as grown people. Perhaps one of the many causes which have helped to bring about a preference for clerical, professional and scholastic occupations, in those who have no natural fitness for them, and a corresponding distaste for manual and bodily labour, has been the too exclusively book and language studies of the common schools.

When a spirit of bare scholasticism pervades the primary schools, the high schools, the colleges and the universities, it is likely to leave the young men and women facing backwards, perhaps modestly proud of their knowledge of the history and theories of the past, but without ability to fill a man's or woman's place in the present. But when scholarship and practical and manual instruction, join hands in the schools to train the whole child, and not merely the memory and language faculties, the children will leave school facing aright, capable and happy in making the right things

come to pass, at the right time and in the right way.

GENERAL EDUCATION.

As Commissioner of Agriculture I find that the efforts of the Department to help the farmers are chiefly intended to increase intelligence, to develop skill and to promote co-operation. These are all educational objects. However, I do not speak to-night in an official capacity; but as a private citizen. We are all interested in education. We have not come to a state of mind when the wrongs of child-life cease from troubling. Education begins with the child's life, and should continue of the right sort throughout. It seems unnecessary and wholly undesirable that the school period should be different from the years which go before and follow it, in its influence on the development of some of the most important faculties. Before the child goes to school, it is receiving most of its education, by its senses bringing it into conscious relationship with the material world around it, and by doing things with its hands. After the boy and girl leave school, they are required to do things with their hands, and to recognize and control their relationships to the things about them. Is it too much to expect that education in the school period, while imparting information and developing the general intelligence, should have cultivated their senses to be keen and alert, and to report accurately and full on what lies all round them? That prepares the mind for frequent experiences of "the joy of clear apprehension." None the less should their hands and eyes be trained to obey readily and skilfully the desires of the mind. Manual training is a means of developing mental power. These,—systematic training of the senses, of the hands and eyes, and of the mind—are some of the objects of practical and manual instruction.

As nearly all educational movements begin in cities and spread into the country districts, this also will doubtless follow the same course. That is one reason why the schools of the Capital are chosen for its introduction rather than those in rural districts. In the cities, as well as later on in the country parts, it will surely give many boys such a love for manual, industrial and productive labor for its own sake, that they will choose such occupations and delight in following them.

WHAT I SAW IN LONDON.

During the summer I had an opportunity to visit some of the primary schools in London in company with the School Board's organizer of manual instruction. Manual training in the primary schools was begun in London about 1886. As woodwork was not then recognized by the English Education Department as a subject to be taught in Elementary Schools the School Board was unable to use public monies to maintain it. Next year a grant of one thousand pounds was obtained from the Drapers' Company through the City and Guilds' Institute. A Joint Committee was formed where-