

BOOK REVIEWS

ARTS AND CRAFTS FOR AFRICANS by J. W. GROSSERT, M.A. (Fine Arts), (Organiser of Arts and Crafts, Department of Native Education, Natal). Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzburg, 150 pp., Illustrated, 7/6d.

One of my students expressed surprise at the fact that he was enjoying his craft lessons. He told me that formerly he had heartily disliked this subject. His teacher would put up a watering-can to be drawn and when he failed to do this well, she would hit him over the head with a ruler and say: "What! Are those eyes of yours beans?"

Teachers all over the country are faced with Arts and Crafts as a subject on the time-table, but very few have had special instruction in how or, moreover, why, they should teach it.

For the past thirteen years we have had students from all over South Africa passing through our Arts and Crafts Department. Only one per cent. had received any previous instruction in arts and crafts and all of them felt bored by it and superior towards African crafts. However, after training, not only had they produced original work of merit but their attitude towards the work of their own people had changed to one of genuine enthusiasm. Without training, so much talent is going to waste and a world of experience remains closed to the growing generation.

Mr. Grossert has written a practical book to meet this specific need.

He begins by giving reasons for teaching this subject and its educational value. Then he gives guidance on the planning of lessons and methods of teaching. He next deals with crafts which are suitable for each stage of development of the pupil. There are useful lists of many articles which can be made from the various raw materials found in different parts of the country. Where these are not available, there are other suggestions. There is a chapter on tool-making. This is important because it makes people resourceful and independent.

A striking feature of this book is its stimulating ideas and excellent illustrations.

If this book is used the result should be a great improvement not only in the articles turned out, but the attitude of the pupils towards their own crafts. As Mr. S. R. Dent says in the Foreword: "All teachers of Art and Craftwork in primary schools and training colleges will welcome this timely and comprehensive book."

H. BUBOLE.

WALL PAINTINGS BY SNAKE-CHARMERS IN TANGANYIKA by H. CORY. Faber, 99 pp., Illustrated. 36/-.

Mr. H. Cory, Government Anthropologist in Tanganyika, has followed up his published studies on the Buyeye of Sukumaland, Tanganyika, with a book on their wall paintings. This secret society of snake-charmers, named Buyeye in the north and Bugoyongi in the south of the territory, is one of numerous guilds with varying activities, into one or more of which almost every individual Sukuma is initiated.

The novices are trained by an instructor called the Kifinda and live and work during the period of instruction in the Ntanda, a hut set aside for the purpose. The walls of the Ntanda are adorned with paintings of the type which form the subject of Mr. Cory's book—*Wall Paintings by Snake-Charmers in Tanganyika*.

The book is very fully illustrated, in both colour and black and white, and a study of the reproductions, and the explanatory note which accompanies each one, provides us with a wealth of legends and traditional stories of the tribe. Indeed, the snake-charmers are a rather conservative group, who, since a written literature is lacking, teach the tribal folk-lore and religious and magical traditions through pictures, thus preserving them for posterity.

The paintings are extremely simple, and through the materials used, soot, red ochre, white clay and python excrement, have a limited colour-range which probably enhances their artistic achievement in European eyes. Each one tells a story, or the elements of which are arranged in a pattern by the artist according to his own aesthetic ideas. Like his more sophisticated colleagues he departs from reality if it suits his purpose. For instance, the artist who depicts the story of Msingija, who caught a four-headed snake, shows the snake flanked on either side by a human figure. Both figures represent Msingija for, says the artist, the picture looks better with two men than with one. He has exercised artistic licence and has altered the true facts of the story to suit his idea of a picture.

One remarks that by no means all the legends depicted include snakes. Although this is a specialised guild, yet the general wisdom of the tribe is taught to the novices and not only that which pertains to their particular study. These pictures are planned to educate and enrich and not merely to amuse and entertain. The European may not learn much technically from the paintings although they have a certain simple charm, but a study of them will help him to a clearer understanding of the culture of the primitive African.

E. K. LORIMER.