

15. *Mr. Davidson.*] Would you make it compulsory that free-place holders should remain in the secondary school at least two years?—With this proviso: that it should be at the discretion of the headmaster or headmistress. It seems to me that if we gave them a term, or even two terms, of probation we could do much weeding-out which would be of advantage to the child, because we could probably send her to technical classes or something else to greater advantage; and it would also be to the advantage of the school, because we could get rid of those who did not work satisfactorily.

16. Do you claim the right for the headmaster or headmistress in a secondary school to refuse to receive the free-place holder?—After a term of probation; but I think that right should be exercised very seriously—that we should have very good grounds for refusing.

17. It would be placing a great power in the hands of the master or mistress?—Yes, and I think we ought to bring forward very sound evidence that we were right in our decision.

18. *The Chairman.*] Would you be inclined to suggest that that power should take the form of a report to the Education Board?—Yes. Now one cancels a free place only on very grave grounds by a report to the Education Department.

19. *Mr. Wells.*] In speaking of the command of language possessed by the pupils, I suppose you are making conscious or unconscious comparison with the pupils at Home?—Pupils of the same age.

20. And from the same class of homes?—No. I take that into account to some extent, but I think much could be done in the school to bring the atmosphere of the lower school in the English high school or secondary school into the primary method of teaching. In our high schools at Home we begin with the children in the kindergarten, which is a much better introduction into school life than the primary school. It must also be taken into account that they come, as a rule, from more cultured homes. It seems to me that if the children were allowed to talk to the teachers, to arrange their own ideas—to be corrected in diction—they would unconsciously gain greater facility in collecting their thoughts and setting them out. It now takes a long time to get at the real thoughts of the child, and a much longer time to get her to express them in an orderly fashion.

21. You recognize that under our very liberal system of free places we draw pupils for the secondary schools from homes where practically no reading is done, and where children hear very little higher-class conversation: bearing that in mind, do you think the language of the pupils is less refined than you could reasonably expect?—I think we are speaking of two different things. When I speak of command of language I am thinking of the language the children dress their thoughts in. The ordinary every-day language in conversation between child and child is perhaps better than at Home, because they have wider fields of conversation here; but the children's means of expressing what they feel is not as far advanced as it might be.

22. Do you not think the lack of formal grammar is felt in the secondary school when the teaching of a foreign language is entered upon?—Hardly, I think, because we start at the beginning in English grammar with them.

23. You spoke of the waste of time in the case of pupils really unsuited to your work. Would there be any if there were more consultation between the headmaster or mistress of the primary school and the parents as to whether the child should take up secondary or technical work under the free place?—I think that if the parent and the headmaster or mistress and the teacher who had most to do with the child were to meet, you would find that the parent would be willing to be influenced by the teachers, and that much good would be done in that way.

24. And that consultation might be made practically compulsory?—Yes.

25. You think there is a good deal of waste of public money at present?—It seems to me so.

26. When you speak of the syllabus as being wide, do you mean that of the primary school?—I referred to both the primary and secondary syllabus. In both cases we cover too much ground.

27. Could you offer any suggestion as to the way in which the primary-school syllabus might be improved?—To begin with, I am very much in favour of limiting the syllabus with regard to arithmetic. Speaking from our own experience, we would far rather know that the girls coming from the primary schools were well instructed up to vulgar fractions and decimals only, and that we could go on from that stage. But they come to us after going over a very wide area, and we find that we have to go over the ground and unpick other people's work. Also, if we could feel that in the primary schools the children were only reading and learning to express their thoughts clearly, we could work to much greater advantage in English than we do. We do not know what they have done, and after setting a certain course we find that there are gaps which we have to fill up. Gaps are bound to occur until we as educationalists have fought the matter out. In geography, too, we think that many facts are taught in the primary schools, but I would have them deal with certain parts of the world only, and with certain sections of physical geography, but not very much; then let them come to the secondary school and continue the course.

28. Do you find much difference in the standards of work of the children who have come from the large city and suburban schools?—Not so much difference in standard as in quality. The work is of the same standard, but there is a very great difference in the quality.

29. With regard to examinations, do you think it would be possible to combine the Matriculation and Junior Civil Service Examinations?—I do not think so, because at present the standards of the two are quite different, and the syllabuses of the two are rather different; they are aiming at two different ends. I am in favour of the Junior Civil Service Examination being retained as an entrance examination to certain positions to which juniors are admitted, but I think the Matriculation Examination should be what it was intended to be—the avenue to the University course.