

The extension of free education from the primary school to the secondary school now places the same demands on the latter. It must meet the needs of the general community. Once upon a time secondary schools were for a privileged class irrespective of ability, and gave what was regarded as a provision for certain select professions. This has changed. We now provide that any pupil showing ability can enter a secondary school. Of over ten thousand secondary pupils, about 85 per cent. are free-place pupils, and the State now pays nearly the whole cost of secondary education; even the so-called endowments consist almost entirely of grants of public lands. Not a tenth of these free pupils, and only a small proportion even of those who matriculate, intend to enter the University. Yet the old traditional studies and methods referred to under the heading of "realities" are imposed on all secondary schools because once upon a time they were merely university portals. We can surely keep that portal open for the few who need it without forcing all secondary pupils to traverse the same path. General secondary education and pre-university education cannot now be regarded as parallel.

#### *Increasing Demands.*

Secondary education must be kept free to all, and perhaps made compulsory for most, simply because even our best primary education relative to the multiplying requirements of our modern civic life, our national responsibilities, and even to the needs of our skilled industries, leaves a boy or girl as comparatively under-educated as did the dame's school in relation to the needs of a generation or two ago.

The former limitation of general education to the primary-school period, with the growing demands referred to, are largely the cause of the overcrowding in our primary syllabus to which public attention is so frequently called. The growing consciousness of the complexity of life and a desire to cover all its phases kept up the cry that still another something was being left out, and the only general form of education—the primary system—was considered to be, like the tram-car, never too full. Thus an apparent width of education was secured at the sacrifice of depth and thoroughness. It is intended to do all that is possible to secure simplification of the curriculum and concentration on essentials through the agency of a more discriminating and practically useful and helpful style of inspection.

Admitting that the old formal study was defective, there is no doubt that the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction, and that teaching often lacks the definiteness and exactitude that a truer recognition of principles would demand.

#### *Solutions.*

The fact that the present traditional secondary school cannot in any adequate sense meet the needs of the majority of our free-place pupils does not prove that it is unnecessary to provide free secondary education. Neither does the inability of the secondary course to interest and retain for any length of time pupils who show that the privilege should be restricted, any more than the unsuitability of secondary-school studies and methods to the equipment of ex-primary pupils proves that the primary schools should be made to conform to the requirements of the high schools.

The whole situation indicates that our secondary-school system should be adjusted to the new conditions, so that, while encouraging and providing for the small minority of university aspirants, the very large majority should not be unfairly sacrificed on the altar of university preparation. This means that primary and secondary education must be considered as a whole, since for an ever-increasing number of pupils it should form a continuous course, which will provide for all as adequately as primary education does now up to the old limit.

#### *The Pivot.*

The secondary-school question thus becomes the pivot of the whole education question. Its proper solution would simplify the primary curriculum, leaving time for a more natural education on kindergarten principles, up to the age of seven or eight years, a more thorough attention to the broad essentials of general primary education, and the dovetailing of much of the present higher primary and lower secondary stages.