

useful to the State if it were more natural, more practical, and less abstract than it is at present, and to express my conviction that the time has come when all concerned should seriously consider the expediency of recasting, not hurriedly or inadvisedly, but after due discussion and deliberation, the whole framework of our higher education.

I do not fear that we shall lose anything by bringing education into closer relation with the every-day experience of the pupils; for it has always seemed to me a fallacy to suppose that remoteness from the common facts of life constitutes an essential element in true culture.

I would give utterance to one further note of warning, and it relates to a matter that somewhat affects my remarks upon the instruction given in various branches of the school course. The secondary school programmes are framed to a large extent so as to lead up to the matriculation and junior scholarship examinations of the University, and yet not one boy or girl in twenty does or can go to the University. I leave the corollary to be deduced.

At the end of 1900 there were 2,792 pupils enrolled in the public secondary schools of the colony. Besides these, some—it is difficult to say how many—are receiving secondary instruction in denominational and other private secondary schools. There are doubtless many others who might be willing to receive secondary instruction if they had the opportunity of doing so. The grants made to Education Boards on account of pupils at district high schools enable the Boards to give free secondary instruction in such schools to those who have passed Standard VI. This meets the wants of those living in or near places where it would not be expedient to establish fully equipped high schools, but where there are sufficient secondary pupils to form one or more classes for secondary instruction. It would not be desirable to establish district high schools in towns that have already high schools proper, as such a policy would entail unnecessary and expensive overlapping. But, in order to insure to boys and girls in such places equal opportunity with those in places where district high schools are established, it would be necessary either to extend the present system of scholarships or to offer an increased number of *free places* in secondary schools to qualified candidates from primary schools, the latter being the less expensive method. These free places, or exhibitions, need not be open on quite such easy terms as the free places offered in district high schools, for in the larger towns continuation classes and technical classes will for some time to come be probably more generally established than in the smaller towns, and these must be considered as forming part of the machinery of secondary education, inasmuch as, if the question be looked at in a broad light, no real distinction can be drawn between secondary and technical education. There still remain those deserving pupils who live in places where neither high schools proper nor district high schools exist. To the best of them free places in the high schools would be open on the same terms as to those residing in the towns, and, if scholarships could be provided for them sufficient to meet the cost of board and lodging, they would be able to take advantage of such free places. The others could take some secondary work in Standard VII., and it is hoped that before long there will be very few places, even in the country, where continuation classes and classes for technical instruction suited to the wants of the several districts will not be found.

At present there are about 350 scholarships given by the Education Boards of the colony, about 130 of which are probably sufficient to provide board and lodging, and may be regarded as country scholarships, the remaining 220 being more likely to be held by those children living in or near towns. The governing bodies of the various secondary schools give free education to 326 boys and girls, 279 of whom are not holders of Education Board scholarships. Out of these 279, 43 receive money in addition to free education, the amounts given being in 11 cases sufficient for board and lodging. Moreover, in some districts scholarships, some for country and some for town children, are offered by the School Commissioners. The existing provision, therefore, apart from district high schools, allows for the granting of free secondary education to about 650 children from primary schools—namely, about 500 from the towns and 150 from the country. The district high schools provide free secondary education up to a fair standard for about 600 more, and it is probable that in a few years this figure will be increased by at least 50 per cent.

Now, we find from returns recently collected by the Department that each year there are in public schools within reach of secondary schools about 2,200 children qualifying for some degree of free secondary education, if we may take the passing of Standard VI. under the age of 14 as roughly indicating such a qualification; but from the same returns it has been gathered that only about half of these children would in any case attend a secondary school; in other words, provision would not require to be made for more than, say, 1,100 boys and girls within reach of secondary schools. It would probably not be drawing the line too strictly if free tuition were offered only to those who had passed Standard VI. with distinction—*i.e.*, in all subjects, and were not over 13½ on the 31st December of the year in which they passed. About 350 per annum would be so qualified. The supply of 350 candidates per annum qualified for free secondary instruction, if each free place or exhibition were tenable for two years, would imply 700 free places open at any given time in the secondary schools to those whose homes are within reach of such schools. Of children in country schools, hardly more than 150 per annum, in addition to those attending district high schools, would be likely to qualify and be willing to attend a secondary school; 300 free places would therefore be required for country children. Now, if no fees were charged to qualified children, and free railway tickets were issued to those country children who could reach a secondary school by rail, almost the whole of the present scholarship grant would be set free for boarding scholarships for other country children; this would give, say, 125 to 140 country scholarships, each tenable for two years, or 250 to 280 scholarships current at any given time, an arrangement which would very nearly provide for the 300 country children just referred to.

We may say, then, that in all 950 to 1,000 free places would have to be provided. The secondary schools are already giving free education to 326 children, or about one-third of the number qualified under the test set up.