The secondary school system of Germany

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

UNTIL recently there has been no adequate account in the English language of the secondary schools in Germany. There have been, it is true, many articles in magazines which quoted single programmes and courses of study, but there has been no general survey of the subject, and, above all, no study of the origin and progressive growth of the system.

Only through a study of its origin and its development does one become able to understand the present condition of a system of education, and to predict with some degree of accuracy its future trend.

It is unscientific, not to say idle and unprofitable, to summon before us an existing system and attempt to pass judgment on it without first investigating its genesis and learning the function that it fills.

Even a comparison of one system with another contemporary system does not go very far to enlighten us on the question of improving our own system; for we must first recognise the social necessity that has called an institution into being before we can
discern its present shortcomings, and before we can judge of the merits of what is offered as a substitute for it.

The new method of science which has come into vogue during the past forty years is slowly taking possession of all fields of inquiry. It has to some extent penetrated that of education. It is no longer possible for a first-class scientific man to write a book that arraigns the entire educational system of the age without any attempt to study its beginnings and growth, and without bestowing so much as a thought on the function which it has filled in forming the civilization of the present. Successful studies on organic growth deal sympathetically with the embryology of a living being, and lavish time and patience on the observation of the crude forms that ushered in the era of organic life on the planet. So, too, must the new literature of pedagogy take on the scientific spirit, and, emulating the methods of the biologist, give its attention to the first steps of education and the subsequent adaptation of a course of study to the social need.

Civilization is the key word in the study of the history of pedagogy. What has been the ideal of civilization, and what have been the means to initiate the new human being, the child, into a participation in its benefits? How has the individual in youth been made to adopt such habits of life as to fit him to help his fellow-men and make him at the same time receptive of help from them?

In the history of school education we note continually a struggle between one-sided reformers and