

*Answer.*—Before answering the question, it is proper to examine the object of public instruction; and the obligation of all governments relative to this subject, which is of vital importance for the happiness, the moral and material well-being of the people, and the prosperity of the country.

Let us see what Mr. Guizot says on this subject, in his *Essay on Public Instruction in France*:

“The state gives education and instruction to those who do not receive any without it, and procures it for those willing to receive it. Such is the object of all the establishments for public instruction. There is no situation, no profession, which does not require certain knowledge without which man cannot labour with benefit to society or to himself.

“There is then a certain kind of education and a certain degree of instruction which all the subjects of the state want. This is what is called *Primary Instruction*. It ought to comprise the precepts of religion and morality, the general duties of men in society, and that elementary knowledge which has become so useful and nearly necessary in all conditions, as well for the interest of the State as for that of individuals. There is also a certain education which men who are destined to lead a life of leisure and ease, or who embrace liberal professions of a higher order, such as commerce, letters, &c., cannot do without. Since intelligence has become extended, it ought necessarily to accompany superiority of rank or of fortune. Without this intelligence, this superiority would be forgotten and would obtain no consideration. Since science has become a real force, it is indispensable to all those whose situation obliges or calls upon them to exercise some influence over other men under the penalty of sinking into inferiority.

“This is the object of secondary instruction.

“In fine, the third degree of instruction is the *special instruction* which forms ministers of religion capable of propagating and defending it; military men in a position to apply, in the interests of country, that knowledge which war, both by land and sea, demands at the present day; statesmen educated in everything which can give a solid basis to the internal and external prosperity of the people; magistrates versed in the science as well as in the principles of the laws, and capable of directing their application; physicians skilful in the use of all the resources of public sciences for the benefit of the public health, and the relief of human infirmities.

“It is only necessary to glance at the history of nations to become convinced that these three degrees of instruction are indispensable, and that upon their relative goodness, their wise distribution, depend, in a certain degree, not only the well-being of the subject, the brilliancy and the prosperity of an empire, but also its internal repose and its duration.

“*Primary Instruction* provides means for the inferior classes of society to extend their industry, improve their lot, and thus to open, to the advantage of the State, new sources of riches. Its necessity is based upon considerations still more important. If it were possible to condemn a people to irrevocable ignorance, how unjust soever such an interdiction might be, we could conceive that the superior classes, in the hope of assuring their superiority, would attempt to pronounce and to maintain it. But Providence has not permitted this injustice to be possible, and has attached to it such dangers that interest, together with duty, forbids Governments to commit it.

“*Secondary instruction* is not of less importance. Its necessity is acknowledged, because men who might contest its advantages have received it, and now reap its fruits; but its bad nature and the imprudent manner of distributing it might have, and in fact have had the worst consequences. Too light and too little appropriate to the state of the nation, or to the wants of the time, it exalts