

CONGESTED PROGRAMME.

YEAR by year the list of subjects prescribed for study in the public and high schools seems to increase. New subjects are added and the old ones widened until the amount of ground which the ordinary pupil is expected to get over has become quite astonishing. Indeed as the pupil of thirty or more years ago surveys this list he might well regard with awe and admiration the prodigious intellect and vast attainments of the rising generation. Surely the law of evolution has got to work with a vengeance at last and men will be as gods in a few generations. So at least we might judge taking quantity as our standard. But how about quality? We shall see. Enquiring into the matter a little we find that the lists of subjects have been extended on very simple and natural grounds. It is assumed that in these advanced times no one should be ignorant of Chemistry, Botany, and Physics; of Physiology and Sanitary Science; of English Literature, Rhetoric and Philology; of Drawing, Music and Elocution. Therefore these subjects must be added to the already extensive list, if not in the public schools at least in the high schools. Our Department of Education seems to be guided by the very liberal principle that whatever it is in any way useful to know must be taught in the schools. How then do the pupils manage to get over such a wide field of knowledge in the short years of school life? Any one who cares to seek a practical answer to this question will soon find that the pupils do not study these subjects in an intelligent manner. Their knowledge of them will be found to be of the crudest, vaguest and most disappointing kind. It is a mere smatter-

ing of disjointed facts; yet acquired at the expense of much mental effort and retained with great difficulty for lack of connecting, meaning-giving principles. The very multitude of the subjects gone over makes it impossible that justice can be done to any of them. The consequence is that, while what is acquired of the new subjects is of small advantage, the old fundamental subjects, which are the very instruments for the general acquisition of knowledge, are neglected in proportion to the time spent on the others. Thus the youth after having dragged with weary and labouring footsteps over nearly three-fourths of the field of knowledge is left with a chaotic jumble of odds and ends picked up from various corners of that vast realm. The keen edge of native curiosity—the mother of learning—has been worn off, but not satisfied, and there remains a distaste for the further study of any of the subjects entered on. But, worst of all, the youth suffers from the want of education. The grand mistake of our Education Department and the ruin of our youth comes from the endeavour to make the schools centres for administering information rather than for educating and developing the mental capacities. Information, however perfect, can never take the place of education. No doubt it is supposed that education will not suffer from a widening of the field of information. But it does suffer. Even the information suffers. It were better to know something definite about a few subjects than to have an indefinite acquaintance with a great many. But, as regards education, it is certain that, beyond a comparatively narrow limit, the more you widen the field of a youth's study the more you lessen