

and recreate the mind (not school text-books), and let them not be set as formal tasks, to be reproduced in school. Still less can be said in favour of home lessons in primary schools. Our faithful adherence to home work is probably due to the force of habit upon us all—parents as well as teachers. However, in any case, whether principals of schools and others entirely agree with me or not, I think that a few minutes' consideration will convince any one that three hours' home work, even for a boy or girl in the highest class of a secondary school, is altogether excessive. I am not aware that the amount of home work now set is greater than it was some years ago; what evidence I have had seems to show that in some schools, at all events, the amount is slightly less than it was formerly.

We next come to the system of free places itself. It has been in force only some three or four years, and has been modified once or twice, each modification tending to make the conditions easier for the pupil. It may be as well to review briefly the whole position in regard to the educational facilities which the State of New Zealand grants to its citizens gratis:—

- (1.) For all up to the age of fourteen or fifteen it provides primary education.
- (2.) To a certain number who show ability somewhat above the average it gives either—
  - (a.) Free secondary education for two years; or
  - (b.) Free technical education for two years.
 (These receive what are called *junior free places*.)
- (3.) To a smaller number, who show sufficient ability to justify further expenditure of State funds, it gives three years more of secondary or technical training (*senior free places*).
- (4.) To a smaller number, again, it gives three or four years of university or higher technical training.

[This enumeration takes account only of those to whom free education is given in such a way as to occupy, presumably, the whole of their time. To others the State gives, or should give, opportunities for continuing their education concurrently with the work of their trade or profession.]

As the number for whom free education is provided is less at each successive stage it is obvious that some selection must be made. It is not for the benefit either of the State or of the individual that any attempt should be made to carry him on through a stage which physically or intellectually he is unsuited to undertake. The selection must be made by the parent, the teacher, or the State.

Selection by parents is out of the question; it is not by any means certain that parents would make a really wise selection, even from the point of view of their children's own interests. Such a method of selection would, if not altogether haphazard, probably have the result that the children of those who were in comparatively good circumstances would stay at school or college longest, without any special reference to their ability or to the benefit the country might expect to derive from training them.

Selection by the teacher would undoubtedly be the best method, but I fear that for the present this is out of the question. To begin with, it is a matter of simple justice that the standard according to which the selection is made should be the same in the various parts of the colony. Even with the assistance of the Inspectors of Schools, it is notorious that, owing to various causes, it is very difficult to make, by means of the ordinary Sixth Standard examinations, a selection of children for admission to free places with anything approaching uniformity, and consequently those who gain free places through the certificate of proficiency exhibit degrees of mental capacity much more varied than would be the case were it possible to make the standard a uniform one. I have no hesitation, after careful inspection of the classes in which such pupils are being taught, in saying that many of those now receiving free secondary education are not likely to benefit much by it. It would be far more satisfactory if all gained their qualification, as many do now, by passing the special examination held in December of each year. [In that case, too, the difficulty about the age-limit would disappear.]

If the State makes the selection, as it does for the senior free places, the examination ought to be, firstly, such that it suits any reasonable school programme; secondly, hard enough to exclude those whom the State is not prepared to carry to the next stage, but not so hard that those who should be taken farther cannot without undue strain do the work required.

It should be clearly understood that one great advance has been made in the free-place examinations, as against the scholarship examinations. Neither of the special examinations for free places, senior or junior, is in any sense whatever a competitive examination; both are simply "pass" examinations—any pupil that passes gains a free place.

The choice of subjects is so wide that I know of no school whose programme it does not suit. In fact, the syllabus of subjects and the scale of marks assigned to each subject were drawn up with special reference to the work actually being attempted in the secondary schools and district high schools of the colony. A hundred marks is given for each hour per week devoted to the subject in the schools in those classes in which the junior free pupils are found. For instance, the average time given to English is six hours per week, so English is assigned a maximum of 600 marks; the time given to mathematics or a foreign language is four hours a week, so each of these subjects is allotted 400 marks, and so on. The aggregate maximum (2,000) accordingly implies a supposed total per week of twenty hours. As the school week generally consists of twenty-five hours, this arrangement leaves five hours free for physical education and other purposes. A junior free pupil is required to take some subject of handwork, practical science being counted as handwork. It must be regarded as an omission in the syllabus of the examination, however, that those who take cookery or woodwork do not under the present regulations receive credit for those subjects when the senior free places are awarded. I suggest that this omission should be put right in the next revision of the programme; but there are other proposals made that will also require con-