

good idea of what the general high-school course is like. In the commercial courses Latin and Greek are not taken; English, one modern language (German, French, or Spanish), and physical training are compulsory throughout the course; mathematics, science, music, history, and drawing are compulsory, but not during all four years; no commercial subjects may be taken in the first year, but they increase in amount as the course proceeds—including stenography and typewriting, commercial law and geography, economic and industrial history, additional English and business correspondence, &c. These programmes, with corresponding information about the technical high schools, will be found in the Appendix.

“Graduation” from a high school—that is, the “leaving certificate”—is granted on credits given for work done throughout the four years, supplemented by examinations held by the teachers themselves. No certificate of this kind is given for a shorter course, although in some cases a pupil who has satisfactorily completed at least two years’ work in a high school may obtain a certificate to that effect.

The graduation certificate qualifies for admission to a university or other higher institution, or to many banks and other commercial houses (when they cannot obtain university graduates, for whom the business men of America are in an increasing degree showing preference).

The freedom from outside examinations which marks secondary education in America, almost as much as it does in Germany and elsewhere on the Continent of Europe, is an undoubted gain, and I am sure the introduction of such a system in New Zealand, properly safeguarded, would be of great benefit to all concerned.

A weak point in the secondary-school system of New York is indicated by the shortness of the time during which most of the pupils attend the high schools. Of the 24,096 pupils on the registers on the 30th June, 1906, 11,784 were in the first year of their course, 6,795 in the second year, 3,640 in the third, and only 1,877 in the fourth year; or of the total roll the percentage proportions were—first year, 48·9; second year, 28·2; third year, 15·1; fourth year, 7·8. In other words, the average length of stay of each pupil in the high schools was less than 1·83 years.

The chief causes assigned for this state of things are,—

(1.) The want of capacity of some of those who enter the schools to profit by any kind of high-school training: these individuals should be encouraged to leave.

(2.) The neglect of principals and teachers to guide pupils, in selecting their high-school courses, along the lines of their special aptitudes. “Before we can say definitely that a boy is too dull to pursue high-school studies,” says the report of the special Superintendent of High Schools, “we must know that he has failed in hand-work as well as in head-work, in science as well as in language. Hence I say that the number of students who are so dull is very few A boy who has shown special ingenuity in the use of tools in the workshop class in the elementary school should be encouraged to go to the manual-training high school; the boy who has evinced ability in literature, to the regular high-school course, and so on.”

(3.) Excessive home work. “When four teachers compete for the home-study time of the pupil there is always the danger that the pressure will be excessive. Such pressure unfortunately bears more heavily on girls than on boys. Because they are so conscientious, girls will try to accomplish all school tasks assigned them. Boys who are given too much to do simply do not do it, and rely on their wits to get through somehow. Hence this foolish pressure falls most heavily on those who are least able to bear it. *It is the business of the principals of high schools to prevent such pressure.* Add to this that many of the children who attend high schools have no place to study their home lessons except among the noises and confusion of a room which often serves all the purposes of a dining-room and kitchen as well as a living-room for a large family, and we may form some faint idea of the difficulties which confront the child when he enters the high school. The difficulties seem to him insurmountable. Is it any wonder that he begs his parents to let him leave school and go to work?” The remedies proposed are: first, to lessen the amount of home work, especially in the first year, when most pupils leave; secondly, to give each pupil advice and assistance, not as a unit in a class, but as an individual, a person; thirdly, to keep the high-school buildings open, under the supervision of the teachers in turn, each afternoon except Saturday till 5 o’clock, and on Saturday till noon, so that pupils may be able to prepare their lessons, if their parents so desire it, under advice and direction (each pupil who remains should be required to take at least half an hour’s exercise in the gymnasium or otherwise). This is the plan adopted in English girls’ high schools: the obvious objection to it is that