

Hence, the average time spent at a New Zealand secondary school by each pupil who enters is a little over two years and a half, exclusive of any time spent in the lower department. This is greater than the average duration of a pupil's stay at a high school in New York or Chicago (where it is about two years), but less than the corresponding period in England, Scotland, Germany, or Switzerland. On the other hand, the proportion of the population receiving secondary education at any one time in New Zealand is larger than in Great Britain, although less than it is in Germany, Switzerland, and some other European countries. Economic reasons are, no doubt, to some extent at the root of the difference; indeed, for a young country, the average length of a pupil's course in our secondary schools may be considered fair. It is not, however, long enough to secure the greatest benefit to the community from the secondary-school system, and every effort should be made to extend it. Besides the economic reasons referred to, which lead parents to withdraw their boys and girls from secondary schools to enter employment, there are three main causes operating in New Zealand to shorten the average length of the secondary-school course. One of these has already been mentioned in another section of this report, where it has been pointed out that the undue length of time for which pupils are kept in the preparatory classes of the primary schools carries with it the consequence of an unduly high average age at which pupils gain a certificate of proficiency or otherwise qualify for entrance to a free place at a secondary school. A second cause tends to cut off the secondary course at the other end. Even for those who do not propose to enter the University the Matriculation Examination has come to be regarded as a kind of leaving-examination; but the standard of that examination has hitherto been so low that it has been quite easy for a girl or boy of average ability to pass it after spending three years at a high school, and many have taken only two years to do so. The University has now set as the standard of work expected the amount of work that might reasonably be covered in a four-years course at a secondary school; and, although this does not require actual attendance at a secondary school for four years, yet the new rule will almost certainly have the healthy result of prolonging the stay of pupils at such schools.

The last cause contributing to the shortness of secondary-school life is of a more general character; it is, in fact, the absence in the community of a hearty and thorough belief in the advantages of education, or, at all events, of secondary education. The average British parent can hardly be expected to grow enthusiastic over the intellectual training to be derived by his children from the study of mathematics and foreign languages, or even over the moral training the schools afford; if he does not see clearly that his sons and daughters are being prepared for the technical work of their future life he is apt to be somewhat sceptical in regard to the advantages of any education beyond the primary stage. To some extent his scepticism has probably been justified in the past; but the present movement towards making the work of the high schools more vocational in character will, if properly carried out, meet this objection. There seems to be no reason to fear that a thorough mental training could not be obtained as well through the medium of a vocational course as from a course based on old-fashioned lines. Such a vocational course should embrace, *inter alia*, a sound study of English literature, history and civics, and a first-hand knowledge of the elementary scientific principles underlying the common facts of life, with emphasis upon applied science (including agriculture and commerce) in the case of boys, and upon domestic science and art in the case of girls. If the programmes of our secondary schools were adjusted in this direction, probably there would be a greater inducement for parents to keep their boys and girls longer at school; at all events, there would be less excuse if they did not do so. The present regulations for admission to senior free places (which have been current for more than two years) give full opportunity for the modification suggested; but, so far, not many schools have taken advantage of the options allowed. Briefly, it may be said that under the regulations the only compulsory subjects are English and arithmetic, and the optional subjects include (besides mathematics, foreign languages, and the ordinary branches of science) such subjects as the following: