

*Free Secondary Education.*

Under the free-place regulations free places are divided into two classes, junior and senior, both being tenable at secondary schools and district high schools.

Boys and girls who qualify for Junior Education Board Scholarships, whether they obtain scholarships or not, are entitled to Junior Free Places, and those who pass the special examinations for free places are also participants in the privilege. Junior Free Places may, again, be obtained by those who qualify for a certificate of proficiency—that is, essentially, pupils who pass with credit the Sixth Standard of the public-school syllabus; but on this qualification the age of the candidate must not exceed fifteen years. Generally speaking, Junior Free Places are tenable for two years, with a possible extension to three years without examination, or, in the case of district high schools, to the age of seventeen.

A Senior Free Place is tenable by any pupil who has passed the Civil Service Junior Examination or the Intermediate Examination, the latter of which is regarded as the special examination for Senior Free Places. Both these examinations are held simultaneously, and differ mainly in the fact that in the Intermediate Examination different papers are set in certain subjects to meet the requirements of non-competitive candidates. The passing of the Matriculation Examination is also regarded as a qualification for a Senior Free Place. But in a largely increasing number of cases Senior Free Places may now be obtained without the necessity of having recourse to an external examination. By a recent amendment in the regulations, the Minister has been empowered to award Senior Free Places to eligible scholars who have satisfactorily completed a two-years course in a secondary school or district high school in accordance with the specified conditions, and are recommended by the Principal of the secondary school attended, or, in the case of a district high school, by an Inspector of the district, such recommendation being subject to the concurrence of the Inspector-General of Schools. Senior Free Places are tenable up to the age of nineteen.

For free places granted in secondary schools in accordance with regulations grants are payable on a sliding scale, in which the capitation payments vary according to the income of the school from public endowments, and are calculated in such a way as to secure to the school for each free pupil under instruction an annual income from public sources and from endowments taken together not less than £12 10s. per pupil, which is estimated to be sufficient to cover the necessary expenditure.

At the end of 1910 the secondary schools giving free tuition to duly qualified pupils, and receiving grants therefor under the Act, were twenty-eight. The total number of pupils on the roll of these twenty-eight schools, exclusive of pupils in the lower departments of the schools, was 4,906, and out of this total, 3,685, or 75 per cent., were given free places under the regulations. The total annual payment at the rate paid for the last term of the year would be approximately £40,698; the approximate average cost to the Treasury was therefore £11 0s. 11d. per free pupil; as against £10 10s. 2d. for the previous year.

In addition, free tuition was given to 170 others who were holders of scholarships or of exhibitions granted by these schools, or by endowed secondary schools not coming under the conditions for free places, making the total number of free places held at secondary schools 3,855, or 75 per cent. of the roll of all these schools. Further information in regard to the free places and scholarships held at secondary schools will be found in Table J4. Moreover, in reckoning the amount of free secondary education in the Dominion must be included the pupils in attendance at the secondary classes of district high schools, 1,918 in number, all but a comparatively small number of whom were free pupils, receiving free tuition at an average cost to the Government