

sideration. It has been suggested, for instance, that the junior free places should be tenable for three years, instead of two; this would, of course, imply a larger expenditure by one-half (or nearly so) on junior free places. On the other hand, there would be a somewhat smaller expenditure on senior free places, but the total expenditure would probably be increased by at least £5,000 or £6,000.

As time goes on it will probably be possible to depend more and more upon inspection, and less upon examination in making the selection for senior free places. In order that the method of selection may not lead to overpressure, it is necessary that the teachers should co-operate with the State in making the selection. The subjects should be chosen to suit the actual needs of the several pupils; there should be no special preparation of pupils for the examination; pupils whose physical or mental powers are not such as to fit them for the next stage should be discouraged from attempting the examination. If there are any teachers of the secondary schools who feel that they are not yet able to take up this attitude, and who accordingly allow pressure from ambitious parents or the glamour of examination results to dominate the work of their schools, then the time has certainly not yet arrived for giving the selection of senior free pupils into their hands. But I have every confidence that, when it is made clear to the principals of secondary schools how much they can do towards securing a proper selection without undue strain—nay, how much of the responsibility really rests with them—they will have sufficient courage to carry out what seems to be their share in the work of selection. In fact, if every teacher, primary or secondary, would do his best to select as candidates for scholarships or free places those only who had a reasonable chance of succeeding on the results of their ordinary school work we should hear very little of overpressure—in the schools, at all events. But if candidates who have no reasonable chance unless they overwork are allowed to enter, then some of the weaker ones are bound to suffer in the process. It must not be understood from the foregoing that there has been of late any increase or overstrain in the secondary schools of the colony; in fact, I think the opposite is the fact. Individual cases of overstrain undoubtedly exist, but these are probably due very largely to undetected physical weakness, or to outside interests which high school pupils attempt vainly to reconcile with their school work—it is necessary to refer only to such things as musical studies, social amusements, heavy household duties—while they are trying to keep pace with their school comrades whose spare time is given to healthy outdoor exercise.

We must beware of the danger of mistaking strenuous effort for overstrain. Strenuous effort is the proper condition of every healthy human life, except perhaps of that of the savage who lives in a fertile tropical island; but, unfortunately, it is doubtful whether strenuous effort on the part of the healthy and strong is not almost inevitably accompanied by a tendency to overstrain in a few of the weaker ones, who try to imitate them or to compete with them. One of the teacher's most serious responsibilities is to check this tendency; the parents in most cases will not do it; the State cannot do it.

I should be sorry to close this report without expressing my appreciation of the readiness with which the secondary teachers welcome criticism and adopt any suggestions that may be made. I hope that it may be found possible in future to make, regularly every year, a fairly complete inspection of all the secondary schools. The appointment of an Assistant Inspector-General of Schools is a considerable step in this direction; but from the rapidly growing demands of departmental office work further help will probably be required very soon.

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