

*Free Secondary Education.*

At the end of 1908 the secondary schools giving free tuition to duly qualified pupils, and receiving grants therefor under the Act, were twenty-seven, as against twenty-six for the preceding year. The total number of pupils on the roll of these schools, exclusive of pupils in the lower departments of the schools, was 4,180, and out of this total, 2,747, or 66 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 £24,824; the approximate average cost to the Treasury was therefore £9 0s. 9d. per pupil.

In addition, free tuition was given to 145 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 2,892, or 69 per cent. of the net roll above referred to. Further information in regard to the free places and scholarships held at secondary schools will be found in Table J3 of E.—6. 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, 2,142 in number, all but a comparatively small number of whom were free pupils, receiving free tuition at an average cost to the Government of £9 11s. 5d. per pupil. There should be added also those receiving free education in Maori schools, 108 in number, and the holders of certain free places in technical schools, numbering 2,000. There is thus an approximate total of 7,142 pupils receiving free secondary education, exclusive of those holders of free places in technical schools who were art students, or were taking courses which may be more approximately described as technical rather than as secondary.

The following table gives a summary of the various secondary free places referred to :—

*Free Places as in December, 1908.*

(i.) Secondary Schools,—				Boys.	Girls.	Total.
(a.) Junior free pupils	..	..	..	1,083	839	1,922
(b.) Senior free pupils	..	..	..	479	346	825
Total	..	..	..	1,562	1,185	2,747
(ii.) District high schools	..	..	..	1,017	1,125	2,142
(iii.) Maori secondary schools	..	..	..	43	65	108
(iv.) Technical day-schools	..	..	..	1,096	904	2,000
Grand total	..	..	..	3,718	3,279	6,997

The following paragraph from last year's report is inserted here, with the necessary modifications, as an explanation of the conditions upon which Junior and Senior Free Places are obtained :—

“ Under the Regulations for Free Places in secondary schools and district high schools boys and girls who qualify for Junior Scholarships, whether they obtain scholarships or not, or pass a special examination for free places, or who obtain certificates or proficiency at the completion of their primary course, become eligible generally for a Junior Free Place, which gives the privilege of two years' free tuition, with a possible extension to a third year without further examination.

“ At the end of the period a Senior Free Place is obtainable to the age of nineteen by all who succeed in passing the Civil Service Junior Examination, either in its competitive form or, as slightly modified for the purpose in question, in the form of a qualifying examination only. The Matriculation Examination of the University may also be used for this purpose, and those qualifying for Senior Board Scholarships, whether by means of the Department's examination or not, are also eligible. As, however, various reasons exist in the interests both of the pupil and of the school for dispensing with an external examination whenever this can be done with convenience and safety, the new regulations, gazetted 2nd April, 1908, encourage the use, as a qualification for Senior Free Places, of a slightly modified form of the ‘accrediting’ system, which has for some time been growing in favour with educational authorities elsewhere, and which forms commonly a characteristic feature of Continental and American schools. Hereafter, on the joint recommendation of the principal of the school attended (or, in the case of district high schools, of an