

again next term put up their right hands." (Up went every hand, mostly right, a few left.)

The speech was longer than this, but this is all I can remember. I have not been able to suggest its oratorical quality, its benevolent majesty. Quite contrary to my estimate of it, it had a marked effect. Some of the girls went pale and some of the boys listened in sober earnest.

Mr. McGinnis ended this stage in his almost royal progress by again shaking hands with me in a grave, yet affable, manner, and then departed to beam on or to blast other schools in the district. Whence had he derived his idea of his functions? It was pure inspiration. None of his predecessors had done anything of the sort. The most they had attempted had been interviews with delinquents in the corridor and the taking down of particulars in grubby dog-eared notebooks.

Mr. McGinnis's case was peculiar. Over thirty years of his life (he was well into his forties) had been spent in humble occupations that gave no scope to his gift, really that of a poet. Then, almost in a moment, certainly in a month, being called to a high vocation, he had risen to it and made of truancy something that more limited men could not make of inspection.

In court, too, he was equally eloquent. He looked upon himself, as all policemen do not, as an officer of the Crown.

Yet—and how strange—to my mind his oration was a tissue of errors. One, many youths who have wagged it and failed to pass their standards have, on leaving school, got into work that held their interest and done very well. One became a mortician in good standing with a graveside manner both faultless and superb. Another who got five out of five wrong in his proficiency, passed by way of panel-beating, into the proprietorship of a garage, and, nowadays, sometimes gives me a lift in his Cadillac. Yet another, a bad case of truancy this, graduated into bridge contracting, and his last tender was for some tens of thousands. What would McGinnis have felt about these boys? With his singleness of mind he would have felt that something in the scheme of things had gone very wrong, just as you and I will feel it has when at the day of resurrection.

Dunedin's Festival

DUNEDIN'S Festival Week, mentioned in *The Listener* a fortnight ago, starts on Saturday, January 29, with a day's programme which includes trotting, golf, swimming, a regatta, an aquacade and piping competitions. The Art Gallery and Model Engineering Club exhibitions will also be open, and the H.M.N.Z.S. Black Prince and Hawea will be receiving visitors. A preview will be heard from 4YA at 8.10 a.m. on opening day, and a similar programme will be heard at the same time each day except Sunday, throughout the festival. Each day also there will be a 15-minute review of the day's events at 9.30 p.m. In the meantime, listeners may hear *Southern Genevieve* (a background talk on the veteran car run to Brighton) at 7.15 p.m. on Monday, January 24, and *Fantare for a Festival* (a programme about preparations for Festival Week) at 7.20 p.m. on Wednesday, January 26.

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tion, some scallywags we know, rise and don robes of glory.

Two, as for law-breaking in its minor forms, does it blacken reputations in the way Mr. McGinnis averred that it did? I myself was fined 10/- for riding a bicycle without a light. I admit being peeved about the 10/-, but was not mortified by a sense of guilt.

Three, leaving the general for the particular, Patrick O'Reilly's mother was neither unhappy nor shamed, for she had too much of her boy's careless, easy nature and took life as it came.

Before McGinnis, Truancy Officers had come and gone with frequency, because their hearts were not in their work. Embellishing his oratory, McGinnis lasted on till he was a grey-haired veteran and lived to have his hand warmly shaken by boys whom he had rounded up and returned to their classes until they were fourteen, or had passed Standard Four. Now he is in an Old Man's Home and

tells all who care to listen, how paramount school attendance is to the security of the Empire. As the Empire is not in a good way, it is perhaps time that McGinnis or his counterpart, was put back on the road again. If not that, his inexhaustible floods of eloquence should surely be tapped for some other cause that lacks assistance.

I have only one suggestion. The all-too-frequent occurrence of divorce should be stemmed. If a McGinnis is put on the job all I ask is to see him bring an unhappy couple together and, as they weep, induce them by his fluent appeal to clasp each other's hands and express to him as he listens, benign, but grave, their heart's contrition. I am sure that in spite of Dr. Kinsey he will, in his progress, mow a swathe of moral reform; and, after all, though it is usually forgotten, that is what the law is for—to make us better boys and girls and men and women.

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LACK OF FORETHOUGHT CAUSES LOSS OF YOUNG LIVES

Many children drowned in preventable accidents

One out of every three drowning victims in New Zealand is a child under ten. Last summer 24 children in this age group lost their lives. And 14 of these victims were babies under five years. Most of these fatal accidents occurred within close call of the children's own homes, where it might be assumed they would be reasonably safe. And they were preventable accidents. Even the shallowest area of water . . . sometimes only a few inches deep . . . is a potential hazard to little people.

DANGER SPOTS

The records show that accidents occurred in such places as sheep dips, sumps, wells, drains, creeks, water tanks and even fish ponds, places often not immediately recognisable as danger spots.

HOW TO PREVENT SUCH DROWNINGS

Make a survey of the area in your neighbourhood for abnormal hazards. If necessary get other parents to take co-operative action with you. See that the danger spots are fenced off or boarded in on your own property and try to persuade your neighbours to do the same. It's surprising what a little ingenuity can accomplish with such places. Even fish ponds have been covered over with light wire netting without detracting from their appearance. If you can't make the district perfectly safe, fence in a suitable play area for younger children, and see that they are not permitted to wander.

WATER WISDOM

See that your children learn to swim as soon as they can be taught. There is no better exercise to build healthy bodies, no recreation that can be put to better use. And make sure they understand "water wisdom"; how to avoid the ordinary hazards of swimming. Teach them the dangers of swimming in a heavy undertow, in tidal rips and river currents. Teach them always to play safe both in and near the water. Most important of all, they should be taught, as soon as they are capable of understanding, the basic principles of life-saving and artificial respiration.

ACT NOW

Don't wait till the danger is brought home to you by personal tragedy. With a little forethought you may save a child's life this summer. It could be one of your own.



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Issued by The National Prevent Drowning Committee on behalf of the Internal Affairs Department.