

SCHOOL AGE OF PUPILS IN ATTENDANCE AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS (EXCLUSIVE OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE) AT THE END OF THE YEAR.

School Age.	1908—28 Schools.			1909—30 Schools.		
	Boys.	Girls.	Total.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
First year	951	697	1,648	1,139	792	1,931
Second year	709	517	1,226	682	535	1,217
Third year	368	311	679	424	280	704
Fourth (or a higher) year ...	321	231	552	316	263	579
Total	2,349	1,756	4,105	2,561	1,870	4,431

A careful analysis of these figures, compared with those for the preceding years, shows that out of the total number of pupils entering the upper departments of secondary schools—

25·0	per cent.	stay one year,
33·5	"	two years,
6·9	"	three years, and
34·6	"	four years or more.

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