

time within which the course shall be completed. The presumption of the law is, however, that the Public School course can be completed before the pupil reaches the limit of the school age, viz., sixteen years. This allows an average of over two years to each form. The experience of many years warrants me in saying that in the vast majority of cases the Public School course can be completed with ease even before the pupil reaches fifteen years of age. If the parent, however, urges the early promotion of his child to the High School, or if the teacher forces the pace to make a reputation for himself regardless of consequences, surely the Department should not be held responsible for the over-pressure.

"Cases will arise where from the temperament of the child it is evident that some caution should be exercised with respect to the amount of work assigned from day to day. For such cases the law can make no provision, and I mention them now in order that you may be impressed with the importance of observing the physical condition of your pupils, lest from professional zeal you overtax their energies. You may have pupils who can study but who will not. These require some stimulus. What that stimulus should be most of you know from experience. There are other pupils who will study beyond their strength; these want to be restrained. How to exercise that restraint is purely a matter of judgment, for which no regulation can be prescribed. It sometimes happens that even a bright pupil is in ill health, and the tasks of the school-room in such cases are irksome. The prudent teacher will deal gently with all such cases. Every pupil is a subject of study, both as to his physical and his mental organization, and the skill of the successful teacher is nowhere better shown than in the adaptation of lessons and tasks to the physical and mental strength of his pupils.

"You will observe that I have asked a committee of the Medical Association to advise with me in regard to this matter, and therefore I propose suspending judgment until evidence is taken. I may, say, however, that the holidays have been increased within the last fifteen years, and that unless there is some gross mistake in the organization of our schools there should not be much physical injury to the pupils by attendance at school from five to six hours per day for a maximum of 200 days in the year. Moreover, it is to be remembered that the average attendance of each pupil in the Public Schools is only 112 out of the 365 days in the year, and in the High Schools 122 days in the year. Even in the case of the maximum of 200 days' attendance there should be very little danger to the average child. Courses of study are never prescribed for the weakest in point of physical and nervous strength, but for the average, and, as already said, the teacher is supposed to see that in the case of the weakest such modifications are made as will prevent any harm.

"Complaint is sometimes made, although not to me officially, that the home lessons prescribed by the teachers are so very heavy as to be a serious restraint upon the time which children should have for physical exercise. As a matter of fact, our school curriculum is prescribed purely with reference to the minimum time of five hours per day, during which the schools, by law, are required to be kept open, and, if pupils and teachers do their work faithfully during the time so prescribed, the course can be completed within the age limit fixed by the regulations, that is, before the pupil reaches sixteen years.

"And here another misapprehension prevails, viz., that home lessons are an obligation imposed upon pupils by the department. As a matter of fact, home lessons are a device of the