

those subjects only in which they failed ; that means of appeal for first-class candidates should be provided, as in the case of second and third-class candidates ; that the Central Committee should be required to assign the limits for each class of candidates at the commencement of each year, and to indicate as far as it can the means to be used in the preparation of the various subjects of examination for the guidance of those candidates who have not the opportunity of attending a Normal School ; that the Central Committee should be required to adopt some effectual means to prevent the recurrence of such serious errors as have appeared in the preparation of some of the papers at the recent and previous examinations, and which in the recent examination have caused serious inconvenience and loss to many second-class candidates ; that the summer vacation for Public Schools should be made the same as that for High Schools."

A discussion took place on the resolution in which Messrs Puralow, McCallum, Carlyle, Scott, and Connor, took part. On motion of Mr. Brown, the debate was adjourned.

During the interval the members were entertained at the Grange by Mr. and Mrs. Goldwin Smith.

THE HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM.

Mr. Seath read the following paper :—

When I selected as my subject to-day "The High School System," I had in view the fact that we should at this meeting be in a position to discuss intelligently, after a six months' trial of its operation, the probable effects on education generally, of the new scheme to which our High Schools are being subjected. Although High School masters are more immediately interested in the question, and its salient features are to be discussed in their section, it is one which, on account of their relation to the Public Schools and the Universities, will naturally attract the attention of all classes of educationists. The matter is one, too, which, from its vital importance, may with advantage be considered from different standpoints. Those engaged in Public School work are in a position, as well as High School masters, to observe its effects, and apart from the interest all teachers naturally take in an educational experiment, the possibility of a similar course being adopted towards them will no doubt give the matter an added importance. In fact, by the annual reports of Public School Inspectors, we see that the grading system has been attempted in several counties, though as yet Government aid is given irrespective of any classification. I propose, then, in the course of the following remarks to discuss briefly what seems to me to be some of the tendencies in our High Schools ; and although it is the critic's privilege to praise as well as blame, if I indulge in the latter more than in the former I hope it will not be attributed to my inappreciation of the rapid progress we have been making in education, but to a desire to provoke amongst the very men who have been mainly instrumental in effecting these improvements that free expression of opinion which is the safeguard of our profession. I cannot hope that what I shall say will meet with general approval ; many of my conclusions will no doubt be combatted, but I submit to you my observations during the past half-year as a contributor to the discussion of a problem which many beside myself regard as still unsolved.

1. Of all the relations of the High School, by far the most important is that it bears to the Public School. Hitherto the great source of trouble has been that in many localities the latter has been depleted to swell the attendance in the former. To meet this difficulty, several schemes, as you are aware, have been devised. A year or so ago it was thought that a uniform entrance examination and more thorough and frequent High School inspection would effectually counteract this tendency ; but it was found that, though the plan was partially successful, the evil broke out afresh with greater virulence than ever. After an unusually long period of incubation, a new scheme had been developed and this half year put into effect—popularly known by the name of "Payment by Results." To use the words of the Inspectors' Report this experiment "will show the country what schools are really doing High School work and what nominally High Schools are doing only Public School work, and will ultimately force the latter to become what they profess to be or give way to more efficient Public Schools." I am inclined to believe that no one has been more astonished by the result of the "Intermediate" than the Inspectors themselves. I should be sorry to say, and I certainly do not believe, that these results are to be taken as a safe criterion of the work the High Schools are doing ; but no one will deny that of the sixty schools that passed none, and the twenty-four that passed from one to two each, there must be a considerable number that are doing elementary work. Besides, after this, unless a school have a reasonable prospect of passing four or five at this examination, there will be little inducement to run the risk of failure and incur the cost of the attempt. So that we are safe in saying that a very large number

of the schools will be uninfluenced by the benefits said to accrue from success at this examination ; and, if the rest of the scheme be fairly carried out, the tendency will be to degrade rather than elevate their standing. In fact, as matters stand the masters of some of the smaller High Schools have refused to do the work required for the Universities and the different learned societies of the Province.

It seems, then, to me that the longer this scheme is in operation the greater will be the tendency to develop two classes of schools with an occasional gradation form between—the High School proper, where the authorities will be able to maintain both an upper and lower school in a well organized condition ; and the English High School, which in many localities will do mainly the work of the fifth and sixth Public School classes, with occasionally modern languages and classics. Such a school as the latter will evidently be a necessity in places where there are a number of small Public Schools, the masters of which will not have time at their disposal to take their senior pupils beyond the line which forms the lower limit of the High School. But in the larger towns and cities, where efficient 5th and 6th Public School classes may be maintained, there can be no possible excuse for the High School of the locality interfering with the proper functions of the Public School, if efficiently performed.

To any one who compares even the present High School programme with the Public School one, it will be evident that to a considerable extent the work of the Lower School is similar to that of the 5th and 6th Public School classes if you omit the optional groups, Modern Languages and Latin.

You will see, then, that the Public School is related to the High School in the same way that the latter is to the University. The High School course overlaps the University curriculum to the extent of at least one year's work, there being senior as well as junior matriculation. And it is maintained that the existence of the former examination will do a great deal towards raising the upper limit of the High School. No doubt it will in time. But why not apply the same principle to the Public School ? Let us have a recognised senior as well as junior High School entrance examination.

It is evident that the relations between the High and Public Schools will differ in different parts of the Province, and that the standard of the entrance test will always be determined by the actual efficiency of the Public School beyond a certain limit. So that in localities able to maintain a High School of the lowest grade only, the entrance test for all classes would naturally be the junior ; and in more populous and richer places the same would be available for those desirous of studying classics and modern languages, while the entrant for English would take the senior examination. I am aware that when a higher test was prescribed for the English entrant at an earlier period of the history of our High Schools, it turned out to be a failure ; but the situation is now different. Latin is not valued so highly as it used to be ; and, if the system of payment by results were judiciously applied to the Public Schools, I am inclined to think that an impetus would be given to the Public School that would prevent its degradation in cities and large towns and be beneficial to education generally. As a matter of fact, so far as I have been able to make out, there has been little or no diminution in the number of High School entrants this last year ; and I am inclined to believe that in the great majority of schools the new scheme will produce no material change in the present system of transference.

2. Financial aspect.—It seems to me unfair that the strong and well-supported High Schools, with large staffs of teachers and every facility for ensuring success, should compete for a share of the same grant with their weaker rivals. Justice to both demands that they should be placed on a different footing. The work in the lower grades must on the whole be lower than, though equally important with, that in the higher ; and in the long run, if the principle of payment by results be justly carried out, the small school cannot possibly hold its own with the larger. What can a school with two masters do in competition with a well-organized and efficient school with six or eight, where there is a proper division of labour ? For my part I feel that in the course of a short time the \$14,600, or one-fifth of the whole grant, which is to be distributed on the basis of the "Intermediate" examination, will be divided amongst a very few schools, in addition to their share of the rest of the legislative apportionment. It can hardly, in the nature of things, be otherwise. Even at the last "Intermediate" seven of the 112 High Schools succeeded in carrying off almost one-half of the grants. The large, well manned, and well equipped school must win in the end. Besides, it will not pay the small ones to incur the expense of the examination for the sake of a possible \$30 or \$40 extra ; and the glory that accrues from passing one or two candidates will be thought so inconsiderable as to be hardly worth the