

stitutions where it has been tried, to the total abolition of morning prayers, which it regards as an important factor in the moral influence necessary for the good government of the University and the well-being of its students. The argument is weak at several points, particularly so in assuming that there are no other motives than compulsion powerful enough to ensure the attendance of students at religious exercises. Might not the character of the exercises themselves be so improved under the stimulus of necessity, that at least those students likely to profit by them would be glad to attend voluntarily? Or might not some less formal but more attractive moral and religious agency have been substituted?

Queen's College Journal for March has a suggestive article on the question why more of the graduates of that University do not enter the teaching profession. One principal reason assigned is that, considering the time spent in acquiring their education, teachers are not paid as well as the members of other professions, it being "an undoubted fact that even the best paid teachers do not receive as much money per annum as even an average professional." This is true, and "pity 'tis, 'tis true." Another special reason mentioned is we believe of still greater weight and importance, though not so often dwelt upon. We can endorse the view of the *Journal* from experience as well as observation, and are strongly of opinion that the evil described is now, and threatens to become more and more, the bane of our public school system:

"The school system has now become so much a system, that, to succeed, a man has to cast aside his individuality and teach according to the system. What his pupils must study or exactly how much of each particular subject, is now so accurately laid down by law that neither teacher nor pupil has much choice left in the matter—though of course the teacher is not absolutely prohibited from teaching this or that, nor must every pupil of necessity study exactly the same subjects and the same amount of each as every other pupil. But when comes in the pernicious system of payment by results. The teacher's ability and the success of the school are judged by the number of pupils who pass certain examinations, and, as a consequence, by the amount of money the school receives from the government. In self defence the teacher is forced to confine his energies and to direct those of his pupils to that work which will tell at the examinations and earn a larger share of the government grant. Thus the teacher is degraded to the position of a taskmaster and his work to a great extent robbed of its charm."

As the Government grant is now distributed on the basis of school attendance it is only indirectly, but perhaps none the less really true that the Teacher's salary depends upon the number passing the examinations.

• TEACHERS' INSTITUTES.

No one can reasonably doubt the educational value of the Teachers' Institutes whose meetings are reported in our columns from week to week. The lectures, addresses, papers, model lessons and other exercises cannot fail to afford many valuable hints, especially to the younger members of the profession. These hints they will be pretty sure to turn to account in their own class rooms and in the management of their pupils.

We are, at the same time, by no means sure that the Institutes as constituted and conducted in Ontario, are doing all that should be done in the conferences of the profession. The tendency seems to be to make them pretty much short-session Normal Schools. They are usually presided over by an Inspector and a considerable part of the time is occupied by the Director of Institutes, both Government officers. We have no unfavourable criticism to make of the manner in which these officers perform their respective functions. On the contrary their ability and zeal are commendable, and must be beneficial to teachers. But their official presence cannot and does not, it strikes us, tend to promote the self-reliance, freedom in discussion, and development of *esprit de corps*, which should characterize such an association of the members of the profession.

As we have often said, it seems to us that the matured thought and practical wisdom of the teachers should form a large factor in moulding the public school system. Educational legislation should be shaped rather by the members of the profession than for them. Their opinions should, to say the least, have very great weight in determining the choice of text-books, the courses of study and the methods of teaching in Public and High Schools. But unless we misread the course of events, the trend of affairs is just now in the opposite direction. There is, perhaps, more bureaucracy in the Education Department than in any other branch of the public administration.

The most effective means of counteracting this tendency, of cultivating independence of thought, individuality and self-reliance amongst teachers, and awakening and stimulating the true professional spirit, is the voluntary convention or association. This should be, in the strictest sense, a teachers' conference. All matters connected with the work, status and growth of the profession should be discussed with the utmost freedom. *Unfettered criticism, favourable or otherwise*, of every feature of the system should be in order. The opinions, experiences, and suggestions of teachers at such meetings should be very carefully considered at headquarters. Such meetings would be full of encouragement and inspiration for all who attended them.

It may be that the Institutes as at present managed are too useful and too necessary as subsidiary or supplementary to the Normal Schools to admit of their being much changed in character. We are inclined to believe this is the case. We do not know whether some division of the sessions between the more formal work, such as lectures, papers and addresses, and free discussion of special topics, would be practicable, or whether it would be possible to have additional conventions entirely independent of Government, and representing larger constituencies than single counties. It seems to us, however, that the teachers of Ontario should have some better organization than they now possess for mutual consultation and for impressing their views upon the Education Department and the general public. We should be glad to hear from teachers upon the point.