

The School.

We invite our subscribers to send contributions for the "Question Drawer," and so help to make it interesting and profitable. We should like to make it helpful in the solution of such literary and historical difficulties as every reader is sure to meet with from time to time. If at any time questions are allowed, through oversight, to pass unanswered we shall be obliged if the one who asked will send us a reminder.

We congratulate Inspector Hughes on the tangible evidence of kind feeling given him by the teachers of the city in the presentation noted in our news columns. Such a manifestation of personal and professional regard, after eleven years of service, is indeed gratifying. The increase of the number of the city teachers during that period, from 67 to 200, shows that the educational progress of Toronto has at least kept pace with the growth of its population and commerce, and Mr. Hughes may well feel proud of this tribute of esteem and confidence on the part of so large and intelligent a body of teachers.

"An examination made by questions that direct attention only to the amount of knowledge a pupil has acquired, is liable to mislead and do injustice. It may make much more or much less of him than he is worth."

So says Hon. J. W. Dickinson in the *American Teacher*. The point is well taken. Any examination questions which aim simply at ascertaining of how many facts the candidate is possessed in regard to the subject matter are a failure from the educational point of view, and any conclusions or awards based upon the answers to such questions are pretty sure to do injustice to the better class of pupils. It would be a mistake, however, to condemn the system of examinations because of its frequent misuse. A skilful examiner will always frame his questions with a view to drawing out not simply the amount of knowledge that has been acquired, but also the amount of intelligent, independent thinking that has been done in referring isolated facts to their proper places in relation to underlying principles and laws.

The Congress of Educators which held its sessions in New Orleans during the last week in February, was a meeting of a hundred or more prominent educators from all parts of the United States, Canada, and Europe. Frequent sessions were held during the week, at which many able addresses were delivered and many good papers read. The question now is how can all the wealth of material thus gathered be utilized for the public good? The *N. E. Journal of Education* says that: "If only the masses of intelligent people could be brought to read a small portion of these admirable addresses; or if the Metropolitan press could be persuaded, for one day in a week, to surrender its columns devoted to the races, fashions, the murder-trial of the gallows-bird sure to be acquitted, or the dreary lucubrations of literary babes and sucklings, and print a selection from such rich material as was offered to the Congress of Educators, there might be more hope of progress," and asks whether it is not possible for the National Association, at its

next meeting, to establish a permanent fund for printing, which shall be able to flood the country with a weekly issue, in pamphlet form, of the most valuable documents of this sort; or, perhaps, better yet, to purchase columns in some of the largest journals?

If the contention of those friends of Queen's and Victoria Universities who are opposed to federation, that the removal of those institutions to Toronto would have a tendency to dry up the streams of private munificence by which they have hitherto been largely supported, could be demonstrated we should join with them in deprecating such removal as a calamity. Under any circumstances our colleges and universities will have to depend more and more upon voluntary contributions for support. The work of higher education can never be adequately provided for from public funds. There is reason to believe that public sentiment is becoming less rather than more in favour of such a course, and that the day may not be far distant when the many who are unable to reap any direct benefit from such institutions will refuse longer to be taxed to support them for the few who can and do profit by the advantages offered. The example of the United States shows what voluntaryism is able to do for higher education. Almost every week we hear of large donations and bequests for male and female colleges already existing or to be founded. This is as it should be. It is doubtful if there is any other way in which a philanthropist can better use his money to advance the best interests of his country and his kind than by devoting it to the support of institutions of learning whose influence will be perpetuated through all time to come.

The following extracts from the address of the Rev. Septimus Jones, M.A., before the Toronto Teachers' Association, are directly in line with the views which the *SCHOOL JOURNAL* is advocating from week to week, and are worthy of special emphasis, as coming from one well qualified to speak on educational questions:—

"System is good, but only as a means to an end. Our educational system is a bureaucracy—the tendency of which, unless carefully guarded, is to reduce the teachers and pupils of the country to a set of mechanical puppets, who must needs dance just as their masters may choose to pull the strings, or, if I may be allowed to use the metaphor, to produce teachers and pupils of one settled type like so many bricks turned out of a machine, all of one weight, size and shape, and bearing the stamp of the manufactory. It is Dutch gardening."

System is good, but only as a means to an end. What we want is to draw out and apply to the greatest advantage the powers both of the teacher and the pupil. Whatever method does this best is the best method. The human mind presents inexhaustible varieties. No two teachers or pupils are constituted exactly alike. For any mortal man to sit at an office table, and thence attempt to regulate all the details of the methods of every teacher in the country, is almost like arrogating to himself the attribute of omniscience. If it happens to be a professional teacher who is seated at that table, he will be tempted to impose his own hobbies; and the modes which used to suit him best must, he thinks, equally suit every other right thinking teacher in the country. If he is not an experi-