

## Notes and Comments.

MR. BOWERMAN'S salary for 1887, in S. S. No. 8, Grey, is to be \$450, not \$440, as stated recently in our columns.

THE interesting "Special Paper" on Chautauqua is from the pen of the Rev. R. D. Fraser, M.A., of Bowmanville.

MISS KIN KATS, a graduate of the normal school of Tokio, has been chosen by the Japanese government to receive three years' training at the government's expense, at the Salem Mass. Normal School. She will then take charge of the normal schools of Japan. She will be the first Japanese woman to be educated at the government's expense in America.—*The Academy News*.

WE have received the following from the Honourable the Minister of Education:—

*To Local Boards of Examiners for entrance to High Schools and Collegiate Institutes.*

DEAR SIRS,—In view of the complaints made respecting the papers prepared for the recent entrance examination to High Schools, I deemed it advisable to confirm every recommendation made by the local Boards of Examiners. In addition to the candidates recommended there were several whose marks were so high (although they failed partially in one or two subjects) as to warrant me in passing them without further consideration. There were others, however, whose standing was more doubtful, and whom the local Boards had not recommended. In order to continue the responsibility with which local Boards are charged in this matter, I advised a re-consideration of the standing of such candidates, thinking it quite possible that, through a desire to construe the regulations strictly, the Examiners had read the papers too closely, thus excluding from the High School some pupils who might very properly have been admitted.

In order that the intentions of the Department may not be misunderstood, I desire to state that, as a rule, the candidates passed provisionally, as well as those recommended, are confirmed by the Department. Some Boards have been found too lax and others rigid in their examinations, and in a few cases the Department has had to revise their work. Owing to some exceptional features in the papers submitted last July the *right of review* was more freely exercised than usual, with the sole aim of restoring the equilibrium which had been disturbed. In connexion with the general work of local Boards of Examiners, it may not be inopportune to make a few observations.

1. The great object of Entrance Examination is to test the candidate's *fitness* for taking up the work of the High School. Deficiencies of a trifling character, such as

a slip in spelling, or a mere blunder in an arithmetical calculation, should not be fatal to his success. Where it is quite evident he comprehends clearly the subject in hand and has that maturity of mind which is necessary for undertaking High School work, then, notwithstanding some minor defects, such as I have already referred to, he should be *recommended* without the slightest hesitation, and the grounds of such recommendation stated opposite his name. (See Reg 86.) On the other hand, Examiners should remember that the standard for *entering* the High School determines the thoroughness of the work in the Public School. Answers badly expressed and badly put on paper, or answers betraying a general want of knowledge of the subject, should not entitle the candidate to any consideration. A good foundation in all elementary work must be laid in the Public School. To preserve the unity of our system the High School should not be required to do Public School work, while at the same time to give as many as possible the superior advantages of High School training, no one should be refused admission who shows reasonable evidence of fitness.

2. The subjects offering the greatest difficulty to candidates seem to have been Literature, Grammar and History. In regard to the first two I am aware that a change in the mode of questioning has been recently introduced, to encourage better methods of teaching. It may be that in seeking to obtain this object a more easy gradation would have been better, but there is no doubt as to the desirability of the object itself. So far as the failure was attributable to the use of terms not found in the authorized text books, or so far as it arose from the adoption of too high a standard, is an objection which can and will be removed. But still the important element, namely, the proper mode of questioning in these subjects, remains. To prevent failure requires more *thoughtful* teaching—more mental training, and less dependence upon the memory simply. In regard to History a similar course is necessary. To memorise a few dates and leading facts—as the multiplication table is often learned—is not *studying History*, and yet many teachers say that is all, or nearly all, pupils who are well up in other subjects can do at the age at which they usually enter the High School. Now, if this be a correct estimate of the pupils' mental grasp at that age, the subject of History might better be dropped out of the curriculum. But is it true? For instance, is it not possible for the pupil to give an intelligent idea of the higher civilization of the Roman occupation of Great Britain as compared with its condition at the time of the invasion of Julius Cæsar—of the bold stand made by King Alfred time and again against

the Danes—of the despotism of the Stuarts—of the benefits of *Habeas Corpus*—of the character of the Georges? etc., etc. True, on all of these and kindred topics the Examiners should look only for such fulness of detail as could reasonably be expected, having regard to the age of the candidates. A judicious Examiner could in this way do equal justice, and, in many cases, test quite as well the attainments of a candidate for a Second Class Certificate and a candidate for entrance to a High School on the same paper—the only difference being the fulness of the answer and the mental grasp exhibited in each case. It is in this spirit the Department desires the examination in History to be conducted. What the Examiners should consider is not, "Has the question been fully and exhaustively answered?" but "Does he show a *fair* knowledge of the facts, either as independent facts, or in their *relation* to other facts?"—"Has he stated all a pupil at his age should know if he had given that attention to the subject which he could be reasonably expected to give?" It is scarcely possible to ask any good question in English or Canadian History, in answer to which many pages might not be written. The intelligent Examiner will at once discern that it is not a matter of *quantity*; it is a knowledge within the natural and necessarily limited range of a child's possible attainments that is sought. To expect more, or to insist upon more, in History, or in any other subject, would defeat the purpose of the examination.

3. I observe it is the practice of many Boards, when the candidate fails in one or two subjects, not to read the remaining papers. When the failure is complete this may be quite justifiable. But when there is any doubt as to the candidate's attainments every paper should be read. It is as much the duty of the Board to *recommend* candidates as to *pass* them provisionally.

4. Much inconvenience sometimes arises from delay in forwarding the usual Schedules to the Department, particularly at the Christmas examination. Hereafter I trust no effort will be spared to have returns made in time.

5. The Department is largely dependent for its successful management of public affairs upon those invested with local responsibility. That they have done their work well is not open to question. In complicated machinery of any kind there is necessarily considerable friction. Where prudence and forethought would remove irritation or promote efficiency they should be exercised. The absolutely perfect is unattainable. Very often "what is best administered is best."

I have the honour to be, yours truly,

GEO. W. ROSS,  
Minister of Education.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT,  
TORONTO, September, 1886.