

Education Department? How is it that of the seven marked changes made in matriculation work by the Senate of the University, during the past year, four proceeded directly from this section, whereas out of the many changes in the High School curriculum made by the Education Department during the same year of change only a solitary one proceeded from this section, while many of the others were introduced not only not with the approval of this section, but even in the case of many individual members at least, with decided disapproval? The reason is apparent. The University Senate made haste slowly, took us into their confidence, laid before us the proposed changes in the curriculum, asked and accepted our advice. The Education Department did not give us a similar opportunity of pronouncing in our corporate capacity on the proposed changes. So it happens that the changes in the University curriculum were either made by this section, or being made by the Senate, received our unqualified approval. So it happens that only an insignificant percentage of the new or amended articles in the High School curriculum of 1881-5 originated with us, while many of them—to put it mildly—were not entirely satisfactory. “Many men, many minds,” is the popular proverb, but the proverb of the wise man is “In multitude of counsellors there is safety.”

I have spoken of changes in courses of study. What about recent alterations in laws and regulations? Many have been made during the past year. We have had no voice in the making of these laws and regulations—I mean, no corporate voice. Individual teachers have been consulted and their opinions have been treated always with courtesy and sometimes with attentive consideration. *But this section, as a corporate body, has neither directly nor indirectly affected in the smallest degree the educational legislation of the past year, and only in an inconsiderable degree has it influenced departmental enactments.*

This section has a legislative committee whose duty it is to look after the interests of this section during the legislation affecting us. But you will find if that committee reports that the result of its endeavours will give you no ground for congratulation. In all this no rights of ours have been infringed for we have no legal status and no legal rights, but I wish to emphasize this fact—that our moral rights are often unacknowledged and our moral influence is at times quite inoperative.

Just here I may say that my remarks apply to a period antecedent to the opening of this annual meeting. Now is their force affected by the fact that the minister is about to lay before us for our cursory consideration, the High School Regulations of 1885-6? We are, I am sure, thankful for the opportunity which rumour says the minister will give us of perusing, in convention assembled, the proposed regulations, and if I had good reason to believe that the regulations would always be in process of making at a period coincident with our annual meeting, I should be inclined to throw much of my paper to the flames, but when I remember that twice in 1884, in March, I think, and again in September, new regulations were sent to the schools, I fear that the good fortune which we are on this occasion to enjoy, is of the *sic transit* nature, and although I shall appreciate the favor to be conferred, I must for the present proceed with my design.

Now comes the question—are High School masters of Ontario thoroughly satisfied with the influence they exert in all matters pertaining to their profession? On account of the peculiar position which we occupy in relation to the Education Department we are disposed to be silent even when we chafe the most at departmental vagaries and delinquencies. Our criticism of the acts of the University Senate are bold and ingenuous: our strictures on the acts of the Education Department, except when given *sub rosa*, are mild,

and shall I say at times somewhat disingenuous? In the one case our public utterances are delivered without fear or affection; in the other prudential considerations set a watch upon our lips. In the one case knowing that the corporations have neither heart nor sensibility, we fearlessly discharge our shafts; in the other we imagine that criticism of departmental acts may be construed as personal or political attacks, and we are apt to hold our peace even when we consider that our vested rights have been invaded; and consulting, as we think, our own personal comfort, we conveniently pursue a policy of silence. Now happily, we have at present at the head of educational affairs in this Province, a gentleman who is neither despotic nor morbidly sensitive, and who seems to thrive on criticism and almost invite it. If we should occasionally growl dissent I don't think we should very seriously alarm him, but it might induce him now and then to throw us a bone.

Here we are, the representative in a sense, of 325 men and women engaged in the noblest work on earth, not excepting even the sacred functions of the ministerial office, and engaged, I may say, in the noblest part of that work, in its middle and most important stage. Many of us should have “a knowledge which a long experience in the management and conduct of schools and the education of pupils, the training of teachers, and the practical use of text-books, alone can give,” and being fairly conversant with the needs of the young natures for whose betterments we are spending our lives, should we not have more to say regarding the best methods of satisfying those needs?

Our corporate functions are, as has been said, deliberative and advisory. Our deliberations have usually been respected and our advice has frequently been asked and followed, but have we cause for complacency when most radical changes can be made touching the very props of our profession without an opportunity being afforded us for passing our opinion thereon?

Well, can any remedy be suggested for this state of affairs? For my part I should be the last to propose to add to the dual functions we at present enjoy the disagreeable attribute of remonstrance. Such a policy would only irritate, and would tend, for the present at least, to lessen rather than to extend our influence. But surely in respectful terms we may, without giving offence, have free speech regarding everything that appertains to our chosen life-work. In present conditions outspoken criticism is too apt to be misconstrued as the outcome of political animosity, but no teacher who is worthy of his vocation would here or there or anywhere in his official capacity, touch even the skirts of political partyism.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not wish to be regarded as disaffected towards the existing educational system. I do not fail to recognize the many valuable reforms that have been made during the last few years in the domain of education. Our system, notwithstanding the virulent attacks of root-and-branch educationists, is immeasurably superior to the system of the last decade. But the feeling to which I wish to give expression is this: that we as a body occupy, I shall not say a humiliating position (for no indignity has been put upon us), but an equivocal position. We come here annually, not as paid delegates, but at considerable sacrifice and expense with the hope that we may in some degree influence educational administration and legislation. We know that we have no legislation. We know that we have no legal rights, but we have been led to believe that our counsels have weight. We now, not by any means for the first time, discover that our influence is not as potent as we could wish. The problem is we—can extend our influence? I think we can in one or two ways. These ways will be suggested by two considerations. First, only a small percentage of the high school masters habitually attend these