

who have the capacity to receive it, and brings to light genius and talent which otherwise would lie "mute and inglorious."

There can be no doubt that the efficiency of our High Schools has greatly increased since 1871, and I shall refer to a few of the changes to which this is to be chiefly ascribed. In the first place, through the pressure wisely exerted by the Department, a greater number of masters is now employed, though the number of schools has slightly diminished. In the year mentioned very few of the 107 schools employed more than one master, now there is an average of three masters to each of the 103 schools. Some schools that formerly had but one master now have four, and there is not a single instance in which *one* master is found attempting the stupendous task of teaching all the subjects of the curriculum. Thus we have better classification, better discipline, better teaching, greater industry on the part of the pupils, and, on the whole, a state of efficiency incomparably in advance of that of former days.

In the second place: I have no doubt that the action of the Department regarding Union Schools, and the qualifications of masters, has been attended with good results. Thirdly, the Entrance examination and the Intermediate have produced so marked an influence that they deserve more than a passing notice.

All experience has shown the necessity of a change, both in the standard prescribed for entrance and the mode of conducting the examinations. Boys and girls possessing a mere smattering of the elements of a public school education had been allowed to swarm into the High Schools to swell the average attendance, and increase the grant from the public treasury. The consequence was that the character of the public schools was greatly impaired, while many of the high schools, far from doing the work for which they were designed, might be said to have a local habitation and a name, but nothing more. It became necessary, therefore, to institute a more rigid examination and to make it uniform for all the schools. This was done; and the excellent results of the change are universally admitted. Justice has been done to the better class of schools at whose expense many of the inferior schools drew large sums from the public funds—not a few of the low-grade schools have been raised to a higher plane—the really good schools have become still better, and new life has been infused into the public schools.

The Intermediate examination, though it has not been so long in operation as that for entrance, has told with great effect on our High Schools. It was instituted, as is well known, at a point about midway between the beginning and the end of the High School course. It is not a competitive, but a qualifying examination; it has been established to render the work of inspection more definite and thorough, and to enable the Department to apply the principle of payment by results. It is really an *instructional* examination. The questions being, for the most part, prepared by the Inspectors, who are familiar with the amount and character of the work done in the various schools, the examination is, in all essential particulars, such as an able teacher would prescribe to test the proficiency of his pupils.

I believe that properly conducted written examinations form a most valuable element in every well-organized system of public instruction. They not only afford a necessary test of the amount and thoroughness of the work done in a given time; they also possess a high educative value. Every teacher, of course, examines orally, teaching and oral questioning go hand in hand; teaching is what the school-boy needs; mere lecturing may do for the University student—though, even in his case, less talk and more Socratic teaching would be greatly to the purpose. But oral examination is not enough; there must be frequent written examinations if the best results are to be secured. The teacher, for example, goes over with his class the work prescribed for a given time. Does he rest satisfied with oral questioning merely? Does he not know that the hasty questions given in class examination cannot test the pupil's knowledge like the carefully prepared questions of the written paper? Does he infer that, because the general answering of the class during recitations has been satisfactory, they are thoroughly masters of the work gone over? On the contrary, he resorts to his written tests, at once fair and uniform, and on the results of these he determines the actual proficiency. He can judge from these whether he has attempted too much or too little in a given time; or whether, as sometimes is the case, his teaching has been at fault. For if the examination proves a comparative failure, he concludes that he has attempted too much, or that his teaching has been defective, or that his students have been less able and industrious than he had given them credit for. It not seldom happens that the ambitious teacher, ani-

mated by a laudable desire to have his school distinguish itself at an examination, attempts too much work within a given time—as when a master, in a few months, hurries a class over all the work prescribed for the "Intermediate." Or the failure may be due to defective teaching. Clever and industrious students, we will suppose, have decidedly failed. Then the conscientious teacher will enquire whether the fault is in himself. Knowing a subject well himself, he often overlooks the fact that what long familiarity has made mere axioms to him, presents real difficulties to the learner. Or there may have been some fault in his *method*, and a careful examination of his pupils' answers, and comparison with his actual treatment of the subject, will enable him to detect his error, and for the future adopt a better method.

But further, the educative value of written examinations is very great. I assert, says Prof. Jevons, that *examination* is a main element of success in training. It represents the active use of the faculties as contrasted with that passive use which too often resolves itself into letting things come in at one ear and go out at the other; examinations excite emulation in the active and able; they touch the pride even of those who do not love knowledge much, but still do not like to write themselves down absolute blockheads; and they are themselves an exercise in English composition, in the control of thoughts and the useful employment of knowledge. Examination is education. It is not merely that which goes into the eyes and ears of a student which educates him; it is that which comes out of him. It is said that to know a subject one must write a book on it. No one certainly knows himself master of a subject till he has reproduced it. So no student is certain that he is really master of a subject, or a portion of a subject, till he has passed an examination on it. Every teacher remembers how often he was deceived in his own student days; how often after listening to an exposition of his lecturer, or reading a demonstration in a text book, he thought he had made it thoroughly his own, till his self-deception was revealed in a humiliating attempt to *reproduce it as his own*. In short, written examinations give a thorough mastery of the subject, prevent the student from sinking into an attitude of mere passive receptivity—educates to logical habits of thought, and clearness and precision of expression. They are, as Prof. Jevons says, "the most powerful means of training the intellect."

The Prussians, even more than ourselves, are a great people for examinations, which really constitute an important feature of the system of education. Entrance into the learned professions, the civil service, and nearly all public offices, depends upon them. They, like ours again, are *school* examinations, and are always tests of the school or university training. The State has a guarantee that the candidate has had a sound intellectual training. In the various classes of the German High Schools, an examination always takes place before a scholar is allowed to pass from a lower class to a higher, and certificates are given on passing. These certificates are guarantees of competency which not only the State and public corporations, but business firms and others, require from applicants for admission into their service. The certificate from *Secunda* or *Tertia* is required by many merchants and by the Government for the Civil Service; such a certificate is now almost indispensable for any young man about to enter a mercantile life.

Every effort should be made to make our Intermediate and other educational certificates highly valued by the Government in determining appointments for the Civil Service—by the learned societies, by the universities, and by the public at large. Already something has been done in this direction. The Intermediate Certificate has been made equivalent to a second-class non-professional certificate; Victoria University was the first to accept it, *pro tanto*, in her matriculation examination, and Queen's has quickly followed her example. These Universities deserve, and I am sure will receive, the hearty commendations of all friends of education, for lending their powerful influence to promote the great work of secondary education. The High Schools thus receive very great encouragement from these denominational Universities; are they treated with equal consideration by the "National" University?

I may remark, while upon the subject of examinations, that perhaps one more may be tolerated—namely, a High School *Leaving* examination similar to the *Leaving* one of the German Gymnasias, the most famous of them all. We have an Entrance examination and an Intermediate; why not have, in time, a final examination at the completion of the High School course? I should be strongly in favor of such an examination if the example of Germany could be followed, which makes the *leaving* certificate *necessary and sufficient* for matriculation in any of the Universities.

And now a few words in conclusion.