

AN ON-LOOKER'S VIEW OF "PAYMENT BY RESULTS."

BY THE REV. GEO. BRUCE, B.A., ST. CATHARINES.

OUR educational system is a good one, indeed we are fond of saying that it is the best in the world, and it would, perhaps, be no easy matter to show that such a statement is beyond the truth.

It may seem, therefore, an ungracious task to seek for defects in it; but it is in no spirit of fault-finding that the following remarks are made; rather do I speak freely because of the conviction that the system can safely bear the most fearless investigation, and because, from its general excellence, defects are very apparent, and the necessity for their removal is the more evident.

The principle of "payment according to results" is familiar to every one at all acquainted with the working of our High Schools and Collegiate Institutes. It is a principle that seemed to promise well; theoretically it contains much to commend it, and very little to which exception can be taken.

Nothing could be more just, on the one hand, or more full of encouragement, on the other, than that schools should be rewarded according to the work done by them. Schools worthy of assistance would thus be encouraged or sustained, and institutions *effete* and unnecessary would gradually disappear, and thus the law of nature, "the survival of the fittest," would come into operation with its usual results. This, I repeat, seems on first sight, to be beyond doubt, the best way in which it is possible to award Government assistance so as to secure the ends for which it is given.

But, in carrying this plan into practical operation, two questions of crucial importance came up at once. In the first place what are the "results" which are to be considered in estimating the value of the work done? And, in the second place, what means shall be used to discover how far these results have been attained?

The attempt to answer these questions practically has brought about a state of things which is, in many ways, exceedingly unsatisfactory. It is true that schools, like everything else, should be valued according to their efficiency, and that encouragement should be so given as to reward faithfulness and stimulate activity on the part of teachers. It is also true that one of the best means of judging of the presence of these qualities is an examination of the work which has been accomplished, in other words by results; but it is manifest that results which are to form the basis on which the efficiency of our educational institutions is to be judged, should be the richest and best fruits of educational training. This should be so because, in stamping them with approval, special encouragement is given to those influences and methods of work by which these results are most readily produced, while at the same time the functions and modes of work specially adapted to the production of other results which have been passed over are discouraged, and in comparison discountenanced, because, so far as official recognition is concerned, they become of small value, being fruitless.