

THE PRESENT AND THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL SECTION.

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When I agreed to prepare a paper on this subject I had but an inadequate conception of the task that lay before me. He that plunges into a river should know how to swim, but with inexcusable temerity I made a plunge, hoping that the waters were not deep. Deep I have found them and the current adverse, and I fear that I must acknowledge that but for the spectators on the shore my struggles would have terminated mid stream.

It is almost presumption in me who have been for so short a time a member of this section to assume the rôle of reviewer and reformer, but "I have some naked thoughts that rove about and loudly knock to have their passage out." This has been a remarkable year in the educational affairs of this Province. It has been a year of change. New statutes, new regulations, new curricula, new textbooks have been showered upon us. In such periods of unrest it will not be surprising if we are shaken from our wonted ruts of contemplation and are led to examine the very *raison d'être* of our collective existence as a branch of this Teachers' Association.

The general trend of what I have to say will be best indicated by three simple questions:—

1. What are the nominal functions of the High School Section of the Ontario Teachers' Association?
2. Are these functions practically effective?
3. Can the influence of this section be extended?

I have obtained from the secretary a copy of the constitution of the General Association and am informed that the High School Section has no separate constitution of its own. I must therefore deduce the functions of this section from the stated objects of the General Association and from our own sessional minutes. I take it then that these functions are: (1) to advance the interests of education by discussing various subjects connected with practical education and the profession; (2) to suggest to the university and departmental authorities such modifications or improvements in laws, regulations, and courses of study, as from experience may appear to the section expedient or necessary.

Now here we have the whole thing in a nutshell. The functions of this section are deliberative and advisory, and in deliberation and counsel they end, if indeed by the grace of "the powers that be" they haply go so far. We have an executive committee and a legislative committee, but an executive committee without actual and with scarcely a fragment of virtual power, and a legislative committee whose findings are as a drop in the bucket of legislation. We give ourselves the dignity of a deliberative assembly, but we constitute an assembly whose only office is to deliberate and advise.

Let us now examine the value of our deliberations and the weight of our advice in the councils of education. Let us take, *exempli gratia*, our last year's meeting and determine what was accomplished by this section. Let us see whether to any appreciable degree our deliberations and conclusions have moulded the legislation of the past year. Let us decide whether the influence of this section in the realm of secondary education is so powerful as to justify us in foregoing annually three days of needed rest in sultry August.

The voice of this section is heard in two quarters. We proclaim our desires on the one hand to the University Senate, and on the other to the Education Department.

At the last annual meeting of High School Masters a number of resolutions were passed with reference to University affairs. At the risk of being tedious I shall take them in their order.

1. That the University of Toronto be requested to recognize as fully matriculated students all who at the local examination shall score in the standard required for matriculation.

2. That the University of Toronto be requested to extend the local examination to boys as well as to girls.

3. That the University Senate be requested to place the subjects of Botany, Chemistry, and Chemical Physics on the University curriculum for junior matriculation, the examination in such subjects to be optional.

4. A motion relating to the objectionable nature of some of the papers set at the preceding matriculation examination of Toronto University and a request to the University Senate to have none but suitable persons appointed as examiners, and to secure that the examiners for matriculation should consist of a professor of the subject examined in, and if possible an ex-High School master.

5. A request to the University Senate to make the pass-work in Classics and Modern Languages at senior matriculation the same as that required for honor work in the same departments at junior matriculation.

6. A motion with reference to the amount of work to be required at junior matriculation in the subject of Latin Prose.

7. A motion with reference to examination in Canadian History at junior matriculation.

Here we have seven specific recommendations. What has been their outcome? The first and the second, in the matter of local examinations, are, I understand, to be followed soon. The third, with reference to science subjects at junior matriculation, has been honoured in the new curriculum. The fourth, respecting the appointment of examiners, has, I fear, not yet received all the attention it deserves. The hint regarding the appointment as examiners ex-High School masters has been duly recognized and has given us good examiners and unobjectionable papers in almost every case, but some examiners who have not breathed, or who have breathed too little, the salutary atmosphere of the school-room still display erratic peculiarities and continue to excite the gaping wonder of the vulgar by their startling ingenuity and seemingly unfathomable lore. The fifth recommendation in relation to the harmonizing of the Honor junior and the Pass senior matriculation work has been followed as far as perhaps it was wise for the Senate to go. The sixth and the seventh recommendations receive their embodiment in the new curriculum.

It will be plainly seen from this resume that the High School masters have the ear and the attentive ear of the Senate of the University of Toronto. Our wishes have been gratified almost in toto, and if this section accomplished by last year's meeting nothing else than the effecting of these changes we did not meet in vain.

Next, let us see what requests were presented by this section to the Education Department and how they were met. Only two motions appear in the minutes.

1. That in the opinion of this section the importance of book-keeping and of such other subjects already on the programme as have special reference to a commercial education should be recognized in connection with the departmental examinations.

2. That the Department be requested to select the sub-examiners from among High School masters and other teachers of practical experience.

These are seemingly all the favors we asked last year of the Department. The first recommendation has been observed. The second, I believe, has been followed in part.

How is it that we have so few requests to make to the Department, whose edicts affect our work so mightily, and so many requests to make to the University Senate, whose acts affect us materially, it is true, but only secondarily in comparison with the decisions of the