

changes, and it is probable that the Irish question would have solved itself gradually, with less conflict and suffering than we have to witness, were it not for the fact that professional agitators have usurped the influence which the clergy once wielded. It requires little gift of prophecy to be able to say that this generation will see the last of the Irish question in the United States. The next generation will probably adopt some passenger of the *Mayflower* as an ancestor in the usual way, and the "Irish vote" will be an historical curiosity.

In asking the clergy to relieve themselves of their work as school-masters, we shall not be seeking to lessen their influence with their flock. We believe that by limiting it to its higher functions it will be increased. Thomas Carlyle's definition of what a priest should be will not be objected to by any Catholic. He said :

"The Priest, as I understand it, is a kind of Prophet; in him there is required to be a light of inspiration, as we must name it. He presides over the worship of the people; is the uniter of them with the Unseen Holy. He is the spiritual Captain of the people, as the Prophet is their spiritual King with many Captains; he guides them heavenward, by wise guidance, through this earth and its work. The ideal of him is, that he be what we can call a voice from the unseen Heaven; interpreting, even as the Prophet did, and in a more familiar manner unfolding the same to men. . . . He is the Prophet shorn of his more awful splendour; burning with mild, equable radiance, as the enlightener of daily life. This, I say, is the ideal of a Priest."

Such an one cannot be an enemy of the State. Let responsible statesmen and the Press make it clear to him that the unification of the two races into one people is the only path that will lead to peace; and though the road may be long and the labour of travelling it great, his sense of the duties of his holy office and his vows will forbid him to decline assistance in the good work.

The statesman who has borne a leading part in the affairs of Canada during the last thirty years is still at the helm. It may perhaps be said of him that his best energies during this period were spent in the task of reconciling conflicting interests. Should the Recording Angel reveal how this great work has been wrought, future readers of the page must not be surprised to find it stained with the traces of many tears. It would be a fitting crown to the work of the great reconciler if he were to turn the first sod of an enterprise greater than any he has yet undertaken,—the Unification of Canada. Than he, no one knows better how crying is the need of it.

W. H. Cross.

THE RECENT UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS.

It has been my duty during the last few weeks to read and mark more than a thousand examination papers. Such a task—involving as it does the careful gauging of the mental capacity of each pupil, the accuracy of his information, his general intelligence, his command of language, and his power of thought—such a task gives one of the best possible opportunities of testing the general efficiency, first, of the school-masters and mistresses of our High and Public Schools, and, second, of the working of the educational machinery of Ontario. Such an opportunity should not be allowed to slip by without giving the public some information as to the manner in which their sons and daughters are being educated. I have not as yet seen in any periodical any allusion made to these examinations. I venture, therefore, to present a few hints and suggestions with the object chiefly of evoking an expression of opinion from those who by age and experience are far better fitted to express an opinion on these matters than am I myself.

Concerning the details of the internal mechanism of the conduct and results of examinations, an examiner's tongue is to a very large extent tied. And quite rightly and properly so. Such opinions and generalisations, however, as he may form or draw from the broad area of facts brought before his notice, may be made public without the slightest detriment either to examiners or examined. Indeed some such opinions and generalisations *ought* every year to be brought before the public. To this subject I shall presently revert. For the present let us examine the efficiency of our teachers and of our educational machinery as tested by the recent examinations.

First, then, as to the general efficiency of the masters and mistresses of our High and Public Schools. Two prominent defects were plainly visible throughout the papers: (1) a very noticeable lack of clearness of thought and expression, leading to extreme prolixity, great vagueness, merging sometimes into a total want of meaning, often into absolute nonsense; (2) lamentable ignorance of grammatical construction.

1. To the practical teacher this want of clearness is significant of much. It may indicate careless teaching, or it may be a sign of indolence on the part of an otherwise competent teacher; but probably it oftenest arises purely from *incompetence*: from an inability on the part of the teacher to convey from his own mind to that of his pupil a definite thought—generally because of the indefiniteness of his own. From whatsoever source it springs, however, this want of clearness is a sure sign of ignorance—it is the common cloak of ignorance. But with the details of this signifi-

cance we need not here concern ourselves. All that need be said is that if a School Inspector found in any of the schools of his Inspectorate an evident and constant general want of definiteness and clearness in the answers given to his questions, he would be perfectly justified in concluding that such pupils were not being properly "*grounded*"—and "*grounding*," there is none but will admit, is the foundation-stone upon which the whole elaborate edifice of education is built.

2. To say that the papers show lamentable ignorance of grammatical construction is to use most euphemistic phrase. The English language is to the vast majority of candidates, an unknown tongue. Of the Queen's English the vast majority of candidates are guilty of murder most foul, strange, and unnatural. Many exceptions, of course, there are; and if I am accused of destroying the righteous with the wicked, I shall answer that the former are not sufficiently numerous to redeem the character of the whole. It is not only that over and over again one comes across instances of the inability to distinguish between "lay" and "lie," between "fly" and "flee," between "sit" and "set," between "round" and "around;" it is that for hours one reads sentence after sentence in which phrases such as "I seen," "he don't," "they is," "he dost," etc., etc., abound; in which plural nouns are linked with singular verbs; in which direct and oblique narration are inextricably entangled; in which there is an utter oblivion of the fact that there exist such things as capitals or commas;—in which, in fact, every known rule that can be broken is broken. And this in the examinations for the Junior Matriculation of the University of Toronto, for the Second Class, and for the Third Class, Teachers' Certificates. What can one say or do? One thing one *can* say, and it is this: Such pupils were taught by men and women who could not themselves talk or write correctly. I may be severe, I may be hypercritical, I may be forgetting that we must not upon this continent and amongst the classes from which University and Departmental candidates are chiefly recruited expect that purity of diction which is supposed to be one of the marks of so-called "higher education;" all this I may be forgetting, but what I am not forgetting is that four-fifths of such candidates will one day be, or now actually are, *teachers*.

Second, then, as to the efficiency of the educational machinery of the Province, as tested by the recent examinations. It runs too smoothly. What do I mean by "too smoothly"? I mean that there are too many inducements held out to the youth of both sexes in Ontario to enter upon studies for which the majority of them (I by no means say all) are by nature and circumstances wholly unfitted. I mean that young men who ought to be following the plough and the harrow, and young women who ought to be in the kitchen and the dairy, are tempted into paths of life which they are utterly incompetent to tread. Knowledge—intelligence, even—is not the sole requisite for a teacher. Demeanour, breeding, manner, culture, refinement—one and all of these are as requisite; and can any one, even the most prejudiced, in his heart of hearts believe that the obtaining of thirty-three and a third per cent. will endow any candidate with these? And how are our youths tempted into what they style the "teaching profession"? By small fees, by bonuses, by emulous head-masters, by pushing teachers, by easy examinations, by lenient examiners, and, above and beyond all, *by the competition between schools*. Many are hurried on from one examination to another to feed the vanity and fill the pockets of an ambitious class of teachers. Nothing is thoroughly mastered, and the ground has in most cases to be all gone over again. The result is that the lowest forms of the High Schools do the work of the Public Schools, and the first years of the University do the work of the High Schools.

On each of these topics much might be said, but this is not the place for it. On one minor one only will I venture to remark—on the small fees, namely. The public perhaps are not aware that by the payment of *two dollars*—that is about two-sevenths of a bricklayer's daily earnings—by the payment of two dollars a candidate may present himself at the nearest town for a Second Class Teachers' Examination. Twenty-eight distinct and separate papers are set.* He is supplied with pens, ink, and paper. A presiding examiner is in attendance for forty-two hours and a half. His answer papers are transmitted, with no cost to himself, to Toronto, there to be examined by men chosen for the purpose.—Thus to strew with roses the really thorny path which leads to success in teaching seems to me to be worse than folly. These things the public ought to know, or, if already they know them, they ought to be reminded of them again and again.

Lastly, to refer to a point already mentioned. It is superfluous to say that examinations are, or should be made, in themselves an *educating* process. They are not merely tests of excellence; they are one of the most powerful instruments the teacher possesses for calling forth or exercising the powers of the mind. Unless examinations are made use of with this end in view, one of their most important functions is wasted. And it has been the habit hitherto so to waste the University and Departmental Examinations. A candidate presents himself for examination; the papers are placed before him; so much time is allowed him in which to answer the questions set; he is passed or "plucked," as the case may be, and—there is an end of the matter. Wherein he failed, in what he was deficient, where he excelled, to what subjects he should devote more attention—of these and similar points he learns nothing. The argument that University and Departmental Examinations are tests, and tests only, is hardly admissible. If they *can* be utilised as educating factors, they *ought* to be. There is surely a science of Educational Economy as there is a science of Political Economy, although no Adam Smith has as yet arisen to formulate its principles; and surely one of these principles is that no educating

* Each candidate does not, of course, write on the whole twenty-eight papers; but twenty-eight distinct and separate papers are prepared.