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COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS IN TOWNSHIPS.

Several inspectors have called attention to the beneficial effects of a judicious system of competitive examinations among the public schools of a township.

We quite agree with them in believing that such examinations, conducted with judgment and care, cannot fail to afford a healthy stimulus to the schools. The general effect of these examinations is to attract public attention to the actual condition of the schools; and, when defects in teaching and training are discovered by means of these tests, to suggest a remedy. Another important effect produced by these tests is the demonstration, practically, of the inefficiency of antiquated systems of instruction, to which a few teachers here and there in a township are wedded, and the economy of time, and the manifest advantage of the newer and more effective modes of teaching which the inspector may have sought to introduce into the schools.

There are two kinds of difficulties which any one who is practically acquainted with the every-day working of our schools cannot fail to have experienced,—the one is frequently met with by the inspector, and the other is a chronic evil (frequently the cause of the first) of which teachers constantly complain. The first is the want of a proper system of classification in many of the schools, and the other is caused by an objection on the part of parents to the teaching of this or that particular

subject to individual scholars. Pupils are pushed forward in some favourite subject, often an advanced one, while in the elementary branches they cannot pass any kind of a satisfactory examination, much less a creditable one.

The inspectors have frequently, therefore, to spend most of their time in some schools (though not so frequently as formerly) in putting back pupils from the fourth and fifth classes, to the second and third. The excuse given is, that the parents—either disappointed at the slow progress of their children, or objecting to one or other study or exercise—have unduly urged the teacher to prematurely promote these children to higher classes.

In a judicious system of competitive examination these evils are most effectively exposed, and the result, generally, is that efforts are made to remedy them. Few inspectors would think of holding an examination in the higher branches of instruction until they were assured by actual experiment that the elementary branches were thoroughly mastered. A competitive examination affords an admirable opportunity of testing this proficiency in elementary subjects. The only question which remains is as to how this test can be most effectively applied.

Two plans have been followed. The first is to hold a primary examination in the elementary branch in each school, and, allow those only who have been successful in this primary examination to take part in the general township examination. The second plan is to hold a general examination of all the pupils of a township, and award prizes to the successful competitors irrespective of the particular school from which they may have come. We have no hesitation in saying that the first plan is by far the best and most effectual. In the first place it is *thorough*; it saves time; it affords a good test of the efficiency of each particular school, and properly excludes from the examination a number of pupils who are unfitted to take part in it, and who would reflect no credit on the school from which they might come. Besides, it serves a double purpose: it first excites public interest in each particular school, and then it introduces a system of healthy competition between all of the schools in the Township. Teachers, too, are stimulated to adopt the best methods of instruction, so that when put to a practical test, these methods will be found to be both economical and effective in their results.