

Had Dr. Ryerson been living in 1883, he would have witnessed in the opposition to a violation of the principle of uniformity by the adoption of two series of Readers, satisfactory proof that he had not fought and won in vain, the battle over text-books.

A system of public instruction implies legislation and governmental control. If a Government is clothed with authority to institute and provide for the maintenance of a system of education, it must be held responsible for its efficiency. The Government must determine what constitutes a school, who shall be its patrons, who its officers, who its pupils, what shall be the duties of patrons and officers, respectively. What shall be the privileges of the pupils. What shall be taught. Who shall teach. What shall constitute the requisite furnishings of a school, equipped so as to render the practical fulfilment of its design possible. The Government must supervise the schools, and satisfy itself that they are organized, maintained and managed, and accomplishing the great work for which they were established.

The Ontario system of education is erected on the principle of uniformity. A school in any locality in the organized municipalities is an exact duplicate of any other school in the province. Uniformity in the course of study. Uniformity in the standard for each grade of certificate. Uniformity in classification of pupils. Uniformity in text-books, and as a practical result of the latter, uniformity in departmental examinations for entrance to High Schools. And should the pupils advance further, they will find uniformity strongly marking the entrance upon any of the professional and arts courses, the passage through the various grades in them, and the final graduation.

Objections have been raised to this feature of our system. For example: To uniformity in classification of pupils, by means of promotion tests based on the instruction obtained through the use of the same text-books. Such a method, it has been said, discourages genius by reining it in and making it keep pace with mediocrity, while mediocrity is unduly pressed forward to keep pace with the gifted. Public Schools are designed for the masses, not specially for the precocious. Waiving the question, what percentage of our school population may be classed as geniuses, for which class should the schools be regulated—the genius or the mediocrity class? Precocious children, more than dull children, incur the risk of overpressure in school. If classification retard their forward movement it does well. Young plants that show a tendency to lengthen out too rapidly, are pruned back to strengthen them at the base, and to postpone their towering flight, lest their growth upward should tax their vitality. If classification be objectionable for Public School pupils, it is objectionable for all students who have one of two courses to face in a given time; pass the test, and move on, or be “plucked” and stay behind.

But examinations hurt the child. Preparation for them overtaxes his young, sensitive nature, necessarily leads to cram, destruction