

FOR THE REVIEW.]

**On Grading.**

Never before, since the first boy went to the first school, has there been such wonderful activity along educational lines as there is to-day. Keen-eyed observers are studying the child almost microscopically; associations to investigate the proper relations between parents and teacher are now common; old-time school curricula, unable to bear the strain of changed conditions, are being radically modified; antiquated methods of teaching and school management are giving place to new, and on every hand are to be seen evidences of change and progress. Yet, despite this apparent advance in the efficiency of our schools, there appears to be no corresponding improvement in scholarship. It must be admitted, however reluctantly, that, in too large a percentage of cases the results are not at all such as ought reasonably to be expected. The reasons for this are as plentiful as blackberries. While, on the score of so-called economy, pupils still continue to be taught, fifty or sixty under a single teacher, with little or no opportunity for necessary personal supervision, and by far the greater part of the teaching remains in the hands of practically untrained teachers, no thoughtful student of the subject can be surprised at the unsatisfactory result. But while the causes cited will account for much, of the failure, no small amount of it must be attributed to the *imperfect grading* of pupils in our schools.

The evils which follow in the train of loose and imperfect grading are so numerous and evident, that to be appreciated they need only to be mentioned. How many schools there are where the teachers' efforts are hampered, even paralyzed, by the presence of numbers of unfit pupils! How many intelligent pupils do we see annually, who by being promoted into grades too advanced for them, are forced out of our schools to commence their life-work with no adequate preparation; or often to continue their education as loafers on our streets, and ultimately to furnish recruits for our criminal classes!

A striking but typical example of these evil effects upon pupils thus unwisely advanced, came lately under my observation. A bright, intelligent lad was graded into a school. He had been a careless student and came into the grade with no adequate preparation. Roused by being brought into contact with a large number of new classmates, he struggled manfully, working early and late, coming daily to his teacher for assistance after school hours, and in every way making herculean efforts to do the work his fellow-students were doing with ease. After a month or two he found, what was only too evident, that the task he had set himself was impossible. Completely discouraged, school became

distasteful to him, and, although naturally a frank and truthful boy, he became a truant, and finally had to be withdrawn from school.

But the effect on the earnest and industrious pupils is not less pernicious. These, forming as they do in any well conducted school, the large majority of the pupils, ought to receive most consideration, not only on the principle of the greatest good to the greatest number, but because, owing their success to their industry, they are by far the most deserving class. Instead, however, of receiving the attention and encouragement to which they have an indubitable right, their advance is so hampered by their ill-prepared classmates that not a few fall into careless habits, while even the best fail to reach that height of excellence attainable under proper conditions.

Perhaps the greatest weakness in our schools to-day lies in the inability of teachers to attract and hold the attention of their pupils. Careless grading renders this almost impossible, if not entirely so. With some of his pupils unable to understand his instruction, and the rest already familiar with it, what hope has the unhappy teacher of gaining interested attention? Under such conditions it is quite impossible; disorder and mischief follow, and progress is at an end.

The necessity of strict and careful grading being thus apparent, the next question which naturally demands attention is, "Who is the most fit and proper person to do the grading?" In order to decide wisely what pupils in a grade ought or ought not to be advanced, a minute and accurate knowledge of each pupil is necessary. His special knowledge of each subject of the course, as well as a just estimate of his ability, must enter into the consideration. Who but the teacher, brought as he is daily into the closest and most intimate relations with every pupil, can possibly have this requisite knowledge? To imagine that an examiner, by a single examination at the end of the year, even if it be a careful and comprehensive one, can determine with any degree of accuracy who ought to be promoted, is to the last degree absurd. How much more imperfect must be the result when, as is often the case, the examination is hurried through in an hour or two, and deals with but a few of the subjects of the course?

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(To be continued.)

Always ask your question first, and then name the pupil you want to answer the question. In this way you keep the attention of the whole class, and make the whole class prepare the answer. Too many teachers call on the pupil before asking the question, thus giving an opportunity to all the pupils, save the one reciting, to pay attention or not as it pleases them.—*Sel.*