

## Special Papers.

### PRIZES AND SCHOLARSHIPS.

(Read before the Ontario Teachers' Association.)

A RETROSPECT over the history of our educational methods shows that decided progress has been made. This progress, however, has not been uniform and continuous, but is made up of a succession of lines, much like those of a vessel tacking against the wind—generally onward, but in its progress often going from one extreme to the other.

Those of you who have spent many years in teaching can recall numerous changes that are nothing but a series of contrasts. To younger teachers also the past decade furnishes not a few such changes in the laws, theories, and practices of our educational work.

That which strikes one as singular is the fact that each novelty has been fairly popular in its turn, almost on its introduction. Indeed, the greater the contrast the more readily has it appeared to meet with popular approval.

Such, for example, were the changes from the operation of our educational system largely through local centres of authority, to the general control of the system from one central office; from the general superintendency to the present ministerial *regime*; from the payment to high schools on the basis of attendance only to payment by results; from payment by results to payment according to local liberality; from the special fostering of classical teaching in high schools to the reign of mathematics; from the so-called mathematical craze to a corresponding specializing in English; and so on through the erratic line which we are expected to recognize as the path of substantial progress.

It would seem, indeed, that legislative enactments and departmental regulations have had much to do in making and unmaking our opinions, instead of our having statutes and regulations as the outcome of opinion prevalent among those who are more directly experienced in educational matters.

To the changes enumerated may be added the remarkable change in public and professional sentiment on the subject of prizes. For many years the Educational Department regularly encouraged the practice of distributing prizes. To-day, if I mistake not, its influence lies in an exactly opposite direction. As for teachers, the entire abolition of prizes now appears to be the proper thing. In our universities the tendency is clearly in the same direction. This, moreover, is undoubtedly the popular view of the question.

If I prove not indifferent to traditional custom, I shall dispose of the question by simply tossing it aside with the remark that

it is virtually settled, and must take its predestined course, until the pendulum takes a swing to the opposite extreme.

This easy method, however, is hardly satisfactory. The emphatic and even impatient utterances of some writers and speakers on this subject—while in harmony with a prevalent spirit of change—may and probably do reflect current opinion; but I am sure that in some cases there has not been a full and impartial investigation of the principles that underlie the question.

In fact it is largely a question of *motives*, and such considerations bring us as teachers into the realm of our deepest problems.

The principles that govern the giving of prizes are not easily distinguishable from those motives that lie beneath our most praiseworthy efforts to excel in the various callings of life.

If we exercise a little patience, I think we shall find that the question is fairly debateable, and also that it will ultimately resolve itself into that of *the preponderance of resulting good or evil*. Herein I hope we may find a practical issue.

1. Let us first examine the reasons usually assigned for giving prizes and scholarships, and ascertain, if possible, how far the intended objects are realized.

(a) *In order to attract students.* This evidently accounts for the major part of our university prizes, scholarships, and medals. It is no secret that our arts colleges are as eagerly competing for numbers as the most enterprising of our medical schools or Collegiate Institutes. The quiet dignity of the competition does not diminish its keenness, nor is the real object of these pecuniary attractions concealed beneath the bland expressions we hear on convocation days as to the heroic struggles of medallists, and the congratulations bestowed in distributing scholarships among the needy sons of wealthy parents who generally receive them.

We must have colleges, and colleges must have students, even if they have to be bribed to attend by displaying long lists of cash prizes. As a rule these inducements are carefully placed at or near the entrance, in the hope that if students thirsting for knowledge can once be enrolled and kept for a year, the charms of an institution so generous will not fail to hold them till graduation.

The same remarks apply generally to all schools that add to the educational advantages they offer these pecuniary inducements. I say they apply generally. It would be too much to say that every educational institution that offers prizes does so merely or mainly to attract students; for prizes are offered in some schools that are crowded with students without an effort being made to swell their numbers. We shall find elsewhere the reasons that operate here. Our universities, however, will hardly deny that the main reason they

have for offering prizes of various kinds is to attract students to their halls.

The amount thus expended is very large, as may be seen by collating from college calendars the lists of cash prizes.

I understand that during the past ten or twelve years Toronto University has spent on an average over \$4,000 a year out of public funds. To this must be added private scholarships amounting to about \$600 a year. The Senate, moreover, has decided to increase this amount by placing at matriculation five additional scholarships.

Trinity College spends annually \$2,000 in prizes and scholarships, \$500 of which is placed at matriculation.

Victoria spends annually about \$500 in prizes, scholarships, and medals.

Queen's spends \$1,000 a year in prizes for arts students, to which may be added \$930 offered to theological students, and \$240 to medical students—about \$2,100 in all.

McGill College offers prizes, medals, and scholarships, of the annual value of over \$4,000.

Dalhousie College, Halifax, offers prizes of the annual value of nearly \$7,000.

From these six arts colleges we have an annual expenditure of over \$20,000, representing an invested capital of more than \$300,000.

To this we may add the large sum spent for this purpose by our theological colleges, ladies' colleges, medical schools, not already named, private schools, public schools, and high schools. The annual expenditure may safely be put at \$35,000, representing a capital of over half a million dollars.

In the United States the annual expenditure in 370 colleges and universities for scholarships alone is over \$100,000. Add to this the money spent for this purpose in their other educational institutions, and we shall have an annual outlay of probably \$150,000 a year, representing a capital of *over two and a half millions*.

Now, if my supposition is correct, that these prizes are offered mainly to attract and retain students, we are in a position to estimate approximately what it costs to induce the youth of our continent to accept the blessings of a good education.

It is important, in reference to this matter, to inquire whether this great attracting force really does attract—whether by this means students are induced to attend our institutions of learning; if so, what class of students are reached, and also whether a sufficient number of students worth educating might not be secured by a process more rational and less expensive. We may profitably consider, besides, what other use might be made of the capital thus invested.

Perhaps the best test of the attracting power of scholarships and prizes can be made by asking each teacher that prepares students for college, or for other examinations where