

made between merely storing the mind and actually strengthening it. In the majority of our schools, attention is given almost entirely to storing the mind. A pupil who has been trained to pass an examination has been crammed with stock knowledge, and is often utterly unable to reason on any subject, more especially if the subject is to him a novelty. The capacity for judgment seems to have become almost impotent, in consequence of the brain having been entirely occupied during many years in storing stock knowledge. Hence it has too often been found, that the man who has passed in the most satisfactory manner a very stiff competitive examination, proves to be in after years excessively dull and stupid. People then wonder how this man ever managed to pass, and consequently they come to the conclusion that examinations are no test of intellectual powers. Examinations, if the questions are judiciously selected, are probably the best means of testing the amount of knowledge possessed on any subject; but the forming of these questions is a matter requiring the greatest judgment. After reading some of the examination questions, I have often felt the wish that I might examine the examiners in the same manner in which they have examined the candidates, and I believe very few would have passed. \* \* \* \* A number of individuals may be able to pass very satisfactorily an examination on a subject of which they know very little; and although well acquainted with a subject, they may fail to pass a good examination on this subject. \* \* \* \* \*

The examiner has two great difficulties to surmount. The first is to give the relative marks justly; this is a difficulty not due to any favoritism, but because, when looking over several hundred questions, it is a severe mental trial to keep the mind at exactly the same standard of criticism. The second is to frame questions, the majority of which ought to be correctly answered, but among which there are two or three which require able reasoning and a thorough knowledge of the intricacies of the subject. \* \* \* \*

The mind is not necessarily strengthened because it has been stored and has successfully passed examinations. The colossal importance now assigned to competitive examinations seems, therefore, not to be based on facts. \* \* \* \* What we require in every walk of life is practical men who can do a thing, not those who can merely glibly write or speak about the theories and principles of how a thing ought to be done. \* \* \* \* One among the many dangers of cramming, or over-teaching, and competitive examinations, is not only a loss of health, but a weakening of the brain power of individuals, which may not be prominently shown until some years have

elapsed. Healthy out-door exercise and calm reflection, so essential to keep the brain efficient, are too frequently sacrificed, in order that a quantity of stock knowledge may be packed into the memory, with the purpose of passing an examination. This knowledge not having been digested, is soon forgotten, and consequently only a temporary benefit is obtained."

All this is deserving of serious consideration by every teacher in the Maritime Provinces. In the majority of our schools is attention given to the *storing* or to the strengthening of the minds of our pupils? The latter process is so little understood, appreciated or rewarded by the general public that we fear that it is only our most conscientious teachers who can resist the temptation to make their success depend on the easier process of storing the mind.

The Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia has some excellent general directions introductory to the course of study. Attention to these directions would render cram impossible. Yet we noticed recently, that when a portion of them was read by a lecturer to a body of teachers, many seemed for the first time to realize its meaning, and others heard it then for the first time.

#### TALKS WITH TEACHERS.

"What do you think of my school?" This question is sometimes asked inspector or principal by the teacher, and it often proves a very embarrassing one. School officers, if they possess tact, will endeavor as the work of the school progresses, to bring to the notice of the teacher as unobtrusively as possible any defects that may exist, and if the teacher is observant she will take the hint. Nothing is more repugnant to a school officer than to bluntly inform a teacher that her work is not satisfactory. If the work is good, he will always be glad to volunteer the information. When the teacher asks this question, it is often for the purpose of repeating the answer. School officers have their own reputation to preserve, and thus it is embarrassing. He does not wish to hurt the teacher's feelings by a too plain statement of the facts, and he does not desire to be reported as praising work that does not deserve it.

Spelling is a subject that cannot receive too careful attention at your hands. Some argue that it is all important for the pupil to become familiar with the form of the word, and that spelling is best learned by dictation. Sight, certainly, is a safer guide than sound, but I think there should be a judicious mixture of written and oral work to insure accurate spellers. Pupils should be held responsible for the spel-