

TALKS WITH TEACHERS.

There are indications that the double school desk will have to go. Already several School Boards are replacing them with single sittings. Among these may be mentioned the St. John School Board. There are many reasons for this and none against it except that of greater expense. The strongest objection to the double desk is that it encourages dishonesty on the part of the pupils. Two pupils in the same class sitting at the same desk, even if not inclined to copy, can not well avoid seeing each other's work, and the weaker one will generally lean upon the stronger, and thus his self-reliance is destroyed. By this teachers are often deceived, the more readily because in larger classes individual examination is not frequent, and it is sometimes found that by sitting alongside a brighter classmate the term's work has been in a manner lost by the duller pupil.

Most country schools are at present equipped with double desks, both from motives of economy and because of want of space, and it will probably be some time before the advantages of single desks become sufficiently apparent to warrant a change on the part of rural trustees. I would suggest to teachers that where new furniture is required that they make a strong effort to induce their Boards to purchase single sittings. I would also suggest that teachers arrange their pupils so that no two of the same standard be permitted to occupy the same desk. There are no doubt some disadvantages in this, but they are more than counterbalanced by the gain that will be made in independent work.

I cannot refrain from quoting here from an article in the *North American Review*, by Julian Hawthorne, and I hope if opportunity offers that it will be read to parents.

"We would not allow our most confidential clerk to engineer a critical deal for us in the market or on 'change; but we have no hesitation in permitting a school teacher, to us unknown, underpaid, tired to death, averse to her or his occupation probably, and sometimes incompetent, to determine the lines upon which our own flesh and blood, with his immortal soul, is to take his departure in life; lines whose direction and grading will practically settle his future.

The outcome of the deal on 'change will immediately and perhaps vitally affect our pocket, but the outcome of the boy will not appear until he is an orphan in name as he already is in fact, and meanwhile, its symptoms are hidden from us by the boy's own precocious hypocrisy and our conniving blindness. And yet children were created to go to heaven, while bank accounts sometimes operate to incline their owners toward another place."

I cannot but notice from time to time how some teachers and schools are enslaved by definitions, and

those of the most hair-splitting nature. These definitions are not of the pupil's manufacture and do not arise from his work, but they are all run in the same mould like bullets, and after they have cooled in the principal's brain, perhaps, they are branded and scattered throughout the schools. Pupils by this process of solving problems by patterns or recipes, become mere imitating machines. They should develop reasoning power and give logical analysis, but each pupil should give his own analysis. If a pupil is required to give the teacher's analysis, or the principal's analysis, or the superintendent's analysis, wherein is he developed? The machine may be thereby completed but it is at the pupil's expense. Another question that arises from all this is, how far should a principal or a superintendent endeavour to impress his particular ideas upon teachers of training and experience? But "that is another story" and must for lack of space be dealt with again.

FOR THE REVIEW.]

Education in British Columbia.

The educational system of British Columbia, as it now stands, is the result of more than twenty years of evolution. It combines the best features of the systems of the sister provinces in a way that makes it both unique and effective.

To understand the true value of this system requires a knowledge of the conditions under which it has been developed, and which it is required to meet. These are quite different from what they are, or ever were, in the older provinces. In the interior, particularly, where everything depends upon the development of the mineral resources of the rivers and mountains, towns and cities appear and disappear with astonishing suddenness. These towns, frequently isolated and difficult of access, draw an ever-shifting population from all parts of the globe. These people do not, as a rule, build themselves permanent homes; but often living in rude hovels or tents, remain only while the "boom" lasts; and then move elsewhere.

This unstable condition of affairs makes the question of education a difficult one to deal with. But the government meets the difficulty in a very effective way. With certain limited exceptions it bears the entire expense of building and equipping the school houses and of paying the teachers. This is certainly a heavy tax on the provincial treasury; and during the last session of the legislature, it was hinted that the time was close at hand when a different system must be adopted. Of course, no one knows yet what this change will be. At present, the four coast cities support their own schools with the aid of ten dollars per capita of the actual