

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL LEAVING EXAMINATION.

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THE luckless results of this year's P.S.L. examinations have fallen with decidedly adverse effect on many a rural section. No such calamity could have been anticipated. Everybody wondered when it came, and yet *it did not come* uncourted or unforetold. Of the pupils who went up for this examination only about ten per cent. were passed and many of these only barely. Such a wholesale failure of honest efforts calls for an immediate investigation. Everyone interested in our national education should be anxious to locate the cause, and, if possible, bring to justice the guilty one. But if it be discovered that ignorance on the part of some has had this melancholy issue, then every effort should be made to instruct the unknowing, that such a disaster may not have to be recorded on the pages of our history yet unmade.

We have enquired from High School teachers in all parts of the province in order to obtain data for inference. A series of questions were given, of which these are the chief: 1. What per cent. of the P.S.L. class passed at your High School? 2. In what subjects did they fail chiefly? 3. Do you notice much weakness in drawing? 4. Were they low in book-keeping? 5. How do you account for the failure (if many failed)? Almost invariably the answers have been like this: "Three passed out of twenty-four," "one passed in class of ten," "two passed in class of eighteen." "They failed in drawing and book-keeping." "Mathematics plucked ours." "The arithmetic paper was the stumbling block." "They cannot draw." "They are poor in book-keeping." "We think the rural teachers have not had a fair

chance to prepare their classes." "The P.S. teachers cannot get time to teach all these subjects as they should be taught."

Now, we confess we have not looked as closely into the results of those examinations, where the pupils were prepared in the larger Public Schools, as into such where the pupils came from the small rural schools. For in schools of this kind too much is often attempted, and time is necessarily very limited. Besides in such schools one or at most two teachers have on their hands the work of the whole school, whereas, in the larger schools, we find in the highest form only the senior fourth and the fifth classes, and in some cases even the fifth alone. We cannot, therefore, find any fault with such an arrangement because, when it was made, due consideration was given to the fact that *time* is a very necessary element for the accurate working of the educational machine. But in many rural districts this principle, although really a fundamental one in pedagogy, is completely lost sight of in the calculation of ways and means for bringing the young mind into the marvellous light of wisdom's ways. And we are going to show that possibly the inveterate and hideous old habit of cramming had something to do with the sad calamity which has this year overtaken nearly ninety per cent. of our most promising Public School pupils. If such a conclusion can be logically reached, the educationists of Ontario cannot be too active in asserting the maintenance of true pedagogical laws in all our rural schools.

The damage done by such a wholesale "plucking" of honest pupils can