

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

FOR THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

THE PROVINCIAL EXAMINATION.

THE next Provincial Examination takes place in July, during the summer vacation. We shall thereby avoid the difficulty and uncertainty which have so frequently attended these exercises in March. And as no ordinary impediments are expected, it is to be presumed that the number of candidates at the different stations will be large. We are induced to make some general remarks on this examination, and invite attention to two or three considerations of practical importance; considerations suggested in part by the fact, that in the last two Examinations the number of failures was unusually large, and not a few, who considered themselves able to stand the test, and were confident of success, failed, and were therefore subject to annoyance and vexatious disappointments in previously formed plans for teaching. Not unfrequently we find it difficult to satisfy inquirers as to these failures, and to make those interested understand why they failed.

The Examination work is divided into four departments, namely History and Geography; Mathematics, Language, and School Management; upon each of which, to secure a License to teach, the candidate must make a certain average. Now the error under which many labor is, that a high average on one or two particular departments will carry them over a failure in some others. Under this misconception they turn especial attention to some one department, perhaps a favorite, and neglect those that happen not to be favorites, and are thereby almost sure to fail on the test, "no branches further below twenty-five than the whole average is above fifty." Nor have we failed to observe that generally, the memoranda of best candidates are remarkably uniform in the award of the provincial Examiners—few going very far above a certain figure, very few below.

We would therefore advise that there be no favorite branches, or that all be placed in this category. Give, as far as possible, equal attention to each, and especially if there should be a branch of study required in the examination to which your taste does not lead, be sure and give it particular attention. This taste for one thing and distaste for another, explains the strange estimates often observed, as for instance in Mathematics; Arithmetic 10; Algebra 40; Geometry 15; or Arithmetic 60; Algebra 0; Geometry 10. With such disparity of estimates we can only conclude that these branches, all of which should be above 25, did not receive an equal share of the candidates preparatory work, and so of other branches. It may be that this disparity is the result of hasty preparation, that the candidate, at a late period, decided upon an examination and the preparation made was a hurried one. We would say to those who make such hurried preparation—you surely should not be disappointed at a failure; look at the number and variety of studies required, and the average to be made in each; consider the application necessary to fix the knowledge of each in your mind so that you can use it, under the excitement of an examination, and separated from all external aids, and you will not feel the least surprise that you did not succeed. If a thorough preparation has not been made, do not attempt it, for even if you should succeed it will be but an accident or a chance; or the hope of success may, in an unguarded hour, be a temptation to wrongdoing. Justice to yourself, to your friends, and to your country, demands that you should not be an unprepared candidate.

We have been informed that in some schools, a few days previous to the examination, several of the younger pupils make an agreement—"Let us go and be examined—we will get some-

thing." This is but an abuse of our system, and results in a waste of public funds, for the average expense of each candidate cannot be less than one dollar and fifty cents. But it is said they are benefitted by the examination; it may be, but of this doubts arise; if it is so, the benefit is rather expensive, and imposes by far too large a tax on the revenues of the Province. If candidates have given time and labour to the necessary preparations let them by all means be encouraged, but if not, let Deputy Examiners—as far as practicable—restrain them.

In two or three stations—the evil appears to be limited to certain localities—we find evidences of dishonesty and meanness. Provincial Examiners write on the returned envelopes from these stations, "evidences of copying." It is observable that this copying always, in some way, betrays the candidate's guilt—for Provincial Examiners, accustomed to the examination of students' work are almost sure to detect the artifice whether it is in the use of books or another's manuscript. It is also observable that all such copying is sure to fail, for while a student prepared for the work has self-reliance, and is therefore sure to succeed by honest means; a consciousness of unpreparedness destroys this self-reliance, produces excitement, and unfits the mere copyist to use with advantage, aids to which he may have a stealthy and hurried access; hence all such dishonest means fail. In this case, emphatically, honesty is the best policy. Rest assured that a thorough preparation for the work will ensure almost certain success; there may be exceptions at times, and a failure of some one best prepared, but such are exceptions to a general rule, and another examination will result in a higher average and the merited reward. A failure should not discourage the honest, persevering candidate, for it is well known that many of our best teachers obtain their grade of License, after two or three efforts.

The annual will be similar in every respect to the semi-annual examinations, the prescribed books will cover all the questions, and the amount of work on the whole, will correspond to that of the last year.

Difficulties, sometimes loss to candidates, occur from what can only be regarded as carelessness. Papers are often put in wrong envelopes, and at an advanced stage of the examination work, are returned to the Education Office, by the Provincial Examiners, marked "stray papers." In some cases such "stray papers" are returned after the candidate's memo. has been sent; sometimes they are so imperfectly marked that efforts to trace ownership utterly fail, or they have not any number or grade mark at all. In each of these cases loss to the owner must result. When it can be done, we take pains to give the owner credit for them at whatever stage of the work they come in; but it is expressly stated in the rules of the Examinations, that papers put into wrong envelopes must be lost to the owner, and Deputy Examiners are instructed to give the necessary warning to those being examined. We, however, wish it to be distinctly understood, that we cannot in any way be responsible for stray papers, and if candidates place them in the wrong envelopes they will assuredly sustain a loss. It is nevertheless desirable that each paper should bear the examination number and the grade of License for which he or she is being examined. The Deputy Examiner writes the station mark upon each envelope, so that when these directions are attended to, should an accident occur to intermix these envelopes, the difficulty may be remedied.

It is the opinion of many of our most experienced Inspectors and Teachers, that third class Licenses should no longer be recognized; and that those who hold them should be permitted to teach for a