

## PROMOTION OF PUPILS.

In the life of a young person one year is a long period. The proper grading of pupils becomes therefore a serious matter. To place them in the wrong class for a whole year may mean overwork, or it may mean the acquiring of habits of idleness, either of which will cloud their whole lives.

Suppose that promotion is determined by a written examination once a year, and suppose the questions and the estimate of the answers to be faultless, there will nevertheless be great injustice done to many of the pupils. Some will be ill or nervous, and so unable to show what they can do. Others, having fluency of expression and ready memories, will be able to reproduce the review work of the previous week so as to appear to great advantage. It will therefore happen frequently that some unfit pupils will be promoted, while those better prepared will be left behind, to the great injury of both.

This will occur when the examination is ideally perfect. But most examinations are very imperfect. It is most difficult even in the subjects most suited for examination tests to frame six questions that will show the pupil's grasp of the subject.

But there are some subjects, such as science, where little more than the memory work can be shown. There are many qualities which should be taken into account, on which the examination throws no light whatever, such as health, age, prior advantages, etc. Not only is it defective in determining fitness for promotion, but it is attended with many evils. Clever pupils take advantage of it to play the first part of the term relying on the cram of the last few weeks to put them through. Time is taken up in review that should be devoted to teaching. Usually one or two weeks are lost in this way at each examination. Good honest work throughout the entire term is not one of the general results of the system.

When so much depends on an examination, there is much temptation to copy—there is often nervous depression from fear of failure, and there is great labor and responsibility for the teacher. Some of these evils are slightly lessened by letting the result depend on three or four examinations, but other evils are increased.

But there is also danger to the teacher. He will naturally want as many as possible of his pupils to pass. That desire will then determine his mode of teaching more than the desire for the mental and moral growth of his pupils. Cram will take precedence of growth.

Written examinations for teaching purposes are entirely different in their character and results. By

the nature of the questions the teacher indicates the directions that the studies should take. He emphasizes certain subjects. He stimulates thought. He discovers the weak places without producing any injurious nervous tension. He trains the pupils to clear and definite expression. Such examinations should be used frequently throughout the term. They will reveal to teachers and pupils alike weaknesses hitherto unsuspected.

As a substitute for the system of grading now prevailing, the following plan has been tried, and has worked so successfully, that it is being gradually adopted in the best schools.

The teacher makes a monthly estimate of the pupils' standing, basing his judgment primarily upon his recollections of the pupils' daily recitations, and upon the results of such written tests as he finds desirable to use for teaching purposes. These estimates are recorded in a book kept for the purpose. The estimates of each month are made without seeing the estimates of the previous months. As often as convenient throughout the term, the principal verifies these estimates. He examines orally, and also prepares suggestive examination questions for the help of the teacher. At the end of the half year, the teacher gives to the principal the names of the pupils arranged in the order of merit with recommendations regarding the grading of a few of the brightest pupils whose interests would be sacrificed by the pupils being kept longer in the same class. If convenient, such pupils are graded. At the end of the year the teacher again presents a list of pupils in the order of merit, together with a statement of other circumstances affecting any pupil, and which should be considered as entitling him to an advance of class. The principal then grades as many holding the highest rank as the circumstances of the next higher class will permit. Any pupil not graded has the right of appealing to the principal or to the school authorities. The pupils not graded go on with their studies from their present standing, and are not required a second time to go over work which has already been fairly well done, simply because it has not been found convenient to advance them to another grade or class.

In reporting estimates, these characters are used:—

Pr=perfect, E=excellent, G=very good, G=good, T=tolerable, P=poor, P=very poor, F=failure. These estimates are reported to the parents at the end of each quarter. No estimates are made in the first and second grades. This plan has been thoroughly tested, and found to be a great gain intellectually and morally.

It has been decided to close the New Brunswick Baptist Seminary.