

British Columbia.

Under control of the Medical Council of the Province of British Columbia.

DR. McQUIGAN, Associate Editor for British Columbia.

WHITE SLAVES.

As we write this article the teachers' examinations are going on in this Province, and it is to them that we have applied the epithet, "white slaves." It is their misfortune and not their fault that they should be so denominated, and an amelioration of their condition is urgently called for. The man or woman who devotes his life to teaching in our public schools must look forward to many years of heart-breaking drudgery and worry before the haven of comparative rest is reached. It cannot be denied that the British Columbia public schools are a credit to British Columbia and compare favourably with those of the banner province of the Dominion, Ontario, but in maintaining this high standard too much of a burden falls upon the shoulders of the mass of the teachers. The system of examination is arranged in such a way that until a certain grade is reached no permanent certificates are granted. The point at which this is placed is a first class grade B certificate, and as the examination for this grade is difficult, only a comparatively few teachers hold it. All below this have to go up for examination every one, two, or three years, according to the certificates held. The object of this is to keep the teachers "fresh" and up to the mark, as certificates in this Province, like liberty in other places, are only kept at the price of continued vigilance and study. In theory this system is no doubt splendid, but in practice it is injurious to the health and spirit of the teachers—particularly to the females—who for long periods of time before examinations have no rest, night or day. To this is added the fear of failure, in many cases realized, which on the delicate system of a woman is often disastrous. In the earlier examinations it is not so bad, as the candidates are usually young and vigorous, but after years of service the mind loses its tone by such continued efforts, and cases of failure to pass examinations, with the loss of position, after years of service in the profession, have come to our knowledge. The Department of Education does not seem to realize the position,

and nobody thinks it worth while to interest himself in the matter. It is not because the present and past Governments had not their political enemies, and that the Education Department has not had its critics, but this particular grievance has never been touched upon to our knowledge heretofore. The teachers themselves do not seem to realize their position. They are always worrying about their studies, but have become such slaves to a system that they look upon them as a necessary part of their existence. As a remedy, we think that a permanent certificate should be granted at a second class grade A. Many of our teachers hold such qualifications already, and it seems fairly within the reach of all, but after that point has been passed, we are of opinion that a permanent certificate should be granted and the candidate be allowed to rest from his or her labors if inclined to do so. Persons who desired higher honours might continue to ascend the mountain of knowledge, just as some hardy explorers climb the glaciers of Greenland for their own information and the advancement of science; but surely every man who has made scientific studies should not be obliged to "do" the Greenland trip before settling down to a life of usefulness and leisure.

It would not make any worse teachers from the point of view of an educationist of the drill-sergeant class, for it is just as easy for a master of arts or a first class grade A teacher to forget as his less favoured brother; and if these are allowed to live without the dread of examinations before them continually, why not in the case of the second class grade A? The present system is making invalids of the teachers and turning them into machines. Let them become men and women again by inspiring them with hope of one day becoming free, and take our word for it, there will be better teachers and better instruction imparted to our pupils. Old and experienced members of the profession will not be forced to leave when by ripe experience they are most fitted to adorn it. Of all classes of men, the teachers of our youths and maidens should be well read and full of general information. Are they? We must emphatically answer, No. Why is this? Because instead of reading literature they are committing to memory dry text-book definitions, which occupies the time that ought to be employed in general reading. Instead of study-