

# The Western School Journal

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## Editorial

### The Teachers' Examinations

During the summer vacation the examinations for entrance to University and for teachers' certificates were held, and it seems necessary to say a few things regarding these, since rightly or wrongly they sensibly affect the character of the work done in the schools. The only points to which reference will here be made are (1) The character of the examination papers and the answers. (2) The examinations as a test of qualification for those entering upon teaching. (3) The examination results as a test of the work done by the schools.

### The Papers and the Answers

The examiners, or to be more definite, a number of them, have been good enough to express their views on the papers and to offer suggestions to students and teachers for future guidance. The report is very valuable, even though there may not be unanimity in the findings and even though in some cases the judgment of the examiners may be doubted. It is unfortunate that the examiners in the practical work—physics, chemistry, oral reading and music—have not made a report.

It is probably a sound criticism which finds fault with sentence structure and general form in the composition of Grade X. and Grade XI. students. It will be quite in order for High School teachers to consider if they are not to some degree responsible for this. Composition cannot be taught successfully by the teachers of English alone. All teachers must unite their efforts. Some

High School teachers have not yet advanced beyond the idea that it is a sign of culture to be negligent in matters of penmanship, punctuation, and all matters of detail. Some of the worst writers—both as to form and structure—are to be found in the ranks of our teachers. They presumably can write well but they take good care to let no one know it. Even those who set examination papers in composition are not always sufficiently careful. Consider such a sentence as this from the Grade X. paper: "Write a letter to a friend about twenty lines in length."

It does not seem a very sound criticism which finds fault with the sentences given for grammatical analysis on the ground that they are too simple. There is no greater absurdity than that of putting long cumbersome sentences before children in the hope that attempts to unravel the tangle will develop power. It is more useful in every way to give much practice with simple sentences such as pupils may use in their own speech and writing. The best thing a pupil could do with such sentences as those given would be to re-write them so as to express the same thoughts in simple form. Grammatical gymnastics has had its day. Unless grammar can be approached in a living way it had better be discontinued as a school study.

It is gratifying to note that students appear to appreciate poetry. Nothing better could be said. Of course, an examination in literature cannot fully test appreciation, but it can reveal much. It is easy to understand how Hamlet is better understood than "In