

The Educational Weekly.

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THE impermanency of the teaching profession is its most serious evil. Until great improvement is made in this respect, much of the educational work of the Province will be wasted; time and money will be uselessly spent; priceless opportunities will be irretrievably lost. We cannot add much to Mr. Fotheringham's exhaustive treatment of this subject (see EDUCATIONAL WEEKLY, Aug. 20th), but we wish to make a few remarks upon it by way of emphasis. Insufficiency of remuneration is one of the causes adduced by Mr. Fotheringham as affecting the permanency of teachers' certificates. But rather it is the superiority of the remuneration of beginners which causes the remuneration of the experienced to be inadequate. The salaries of teachers, as of all other workers, are determined by the ordinary influences of supply and demand. The teaching profession, however, being protected, receives a larger remuneration than it would receive were its protection removed. The average third class teacher, whether young man or young woman, obtains a larger salary than can be got in any other occupation; especially is this true when the short hours and long vacations of teachers are taken into consideration. This superiority of remuneration, being well known, affects *very greatly* the quantity of the supply. Every year, as Mr. Fotheringham says, novitiates equal in number to more than one fifth of the entire number of places to be filled, are anxious to secure employment. The experienced and accomplished teacher is necessarily brought into competition with the inexperienced and less accomplished. School boards are not discriminating. They cannot, it is true, descend lower than a third class certificate; it is here that the protective policy of our system benefits both the profession and the community. But so low as possible the school boards do descend; and the intelligent, energetic teacher, finding himself pushed out, drifts away into some other occupation where his ability, being engaged in the production of what has a monetary value, shall be more certainly recognized and remunerated.

THE large annual number of candidates for third class certificates is greatly due to the rivalry, or if that be too strong a word, the emulation of high schools. Examinations have become so much the goal of educational work in Ontario that school life and educational vitality have become almost dependent upon them. Had the Department of Education recognized this earlier,

this feature of our system could have been utilized for the general benefit of the people, not for the class of teachers alone. If examinations are necessary to educational progress, then such examinations should have been instituted as would stimulate the intellectual activities of those who are not destined to become teachers. The Intermediate was such an examination, but it fell into discredit through being made the meter of monetary supply. The present Commercial Course and High School Graduation examinations are intended to direct high school work into channels which shall benefit the people at large; but we fear that they are too closely connected with the ordinary teachers' examinations to do other than afford additional spur to the crowds preparing for teachers' certificates. That a teacher should persuade pupils to prepare for and obtain a teacher's certificate is proper enough. A certificate gained, even with no intent of using it, indicates a real educational achievement of which any child or parent may be proud. But too few head masters recognize their responsibility for the good or evil choice which their pupils may make in deciding what to do in life. Boys and girls are incited to enter professions for which they have not the requisite ability or disposition, and especially is this true of the teaching profession. We are fully persuaded that of all the candidates that write for certificates year by year, more than one half are by nature unsuited to the profession they aspire to, or, by habits are unfit for it. A teacher's mind should be refined and intellectual, his scholarship, as far as it goes, exact, his habits pure and becoming, his energy unceasing, his sympathy a dominating force, his tact and judgment perfect, his character unstained, his disposition gentle, yet firm, his aspirations noble. Yet how few candidates, at any examination, approach this ideal! A head master's plain and positive duty is to dissuade all those who are naturally unqualified, or who cannot be successful in the true sense of the word, from attempting to enter upon what is one of the most responsible posts in life. Schoolmasters, instead of vying with one another in sending up for examination the greatest number, should be zealous in seeing that all their influence is used in directing their pupils to those occupations in life to which they are best suited. If they were thus zealous, we should hear much less about the overcrowding of the profession.

TO impose a heavy fee upon candidates would be, as we said last week, a protection of the wrong sort, as it would keep out of the profession many who otherwise would be-

come the brightest ornaments of it. It is impracticable to raise the standard too high, as many sections cannot afford to pay more for their teachers than what they now pay. Equalization of the sections, which this last thought suggests, is, we may say, impossible. The present scheme for raising a lump sum off the whole township, and dividing it among the sections in proportion to the number of teachers they employ, is perhaps the nearest approach to equalization that can be made. Township boards are not favorably looked upon; the genius of our people is for local self-government, and perhaps it is not best to thwart it. But these considerations lead to two practicable partial remedies. FIRST, the standard, such as it is, can be rigidly adhered to. That is, not that the examination paper should be made harder, the lists of subjects increased, or the limits of the subjects be extended; but that the minimum percentages for provincial certificates should be kept constantly to that pitch which would ensure careful training and painstaking work. We mean that the papers should be so constructed that ability, conjoined with indolence and carelessness, should fail, and that average intellect, if supported by industry and accuracy, should be sure to succeed.

SECONDLY, the grants made by the Legislature to the school boards should have some relation to the quality of the teaching the boards contract for. The time was when the legislative grants to public schools formed a large portion of their revenue. The very existence of the schools depended upon them. This is no longer so. The people support their schools willingly—although thankful, of course, for legislative patronage. In fact, legislative grants are, as a rule, less than one eighth of the amounts raised by assessments; they average less than a tenth. If these legislative grants were taken away to-morrow, only a small proportion of the schools of the Province would be imperilled. Since this is so, let a part of what is now given for *existence* (which, however, is secure) be given for *quality of work done*, which now needs bettering more than anything else. Let the principle be applied which is adopted in the distribution of the high school grants. Let so much be given to each section for every second class teacher employed, and so much for every first class teacher employed. This method of distribution might, at first, be permissive in its operation, and adopted only in those counties that desired it. Public opinion in the counties could be educated to a recognition of its importance before it was actually put in force.