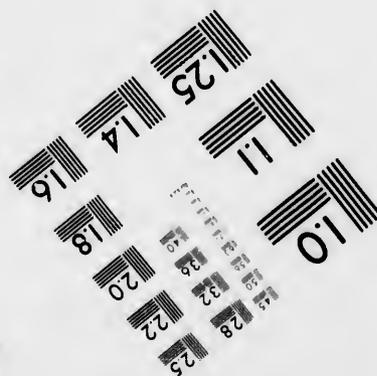
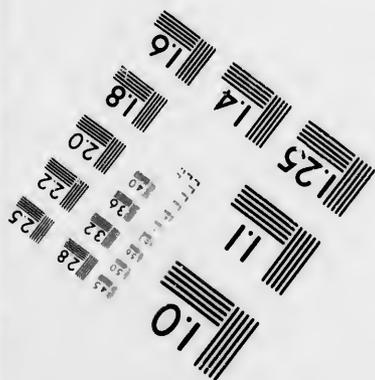
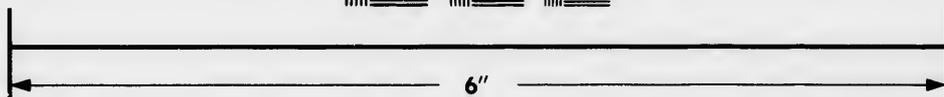
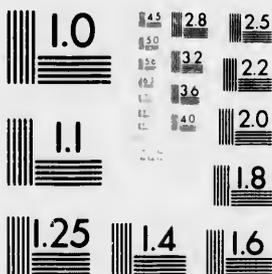


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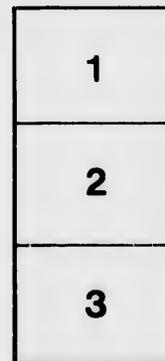
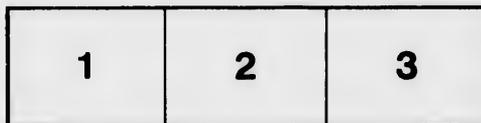
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# PROGRESS IN EDUCATION.

**The System of To-day compared with that in vogue Half a Century ago.**

**DR. SANGSTER'S ABLE ADDRESS AT THE NORMAL SCHOOL JUBILEE CELEBRATION.**

**A PICTURE OF A COUNTRY SCHOOL IN THE EARLY 50'S—THE SEEDS OF REVOLUTION WERE NOT SOWN IN VAIN—WORK OF EARLY NORMAL GRADUATES—NEWSPAPER CRITICISM A POTENT FACTOR IN PROGRESS—THE PRESENT EDUCATION SYSTEM DEALT WITH IN DETAIL—UNIFORMITY OF EXAMINATIONS COMMENDED—DEPREICATION OF SCHOOL WORK UNDER HIGH PRESSURE—THE NEEDS OF THE RURAL DISTRICTS.**

The following is the greater part of an address delivered by Dr. J. H. Sangster, a former Principal of the Normal School, on the occasion of the jubilee celebration of that institution, held recently in Toronto :—

Where do we stand, educationally, as compared with fifty years ago? This is altogether too large an order to be filled in the allotted time. Fortunately, the higher, or University, aspect of the question may be eliminated, as not directly bearing on the occasion we are here to celebrate. But, even restricting myself to a comparison of the elementary schools and teaching of the present with those of fifty years ago—the best view I can possibly offer you within the prescribed space of twenty minutes must, necessarily, be of very cursory and incomplete character.

## A Master of the Old School.

Fifty years ago the youth of our fair Province were not overburdened with educational privileges. Upper Canada College and a few widely-scattered Grammar Schools afforded moderate educational opportunities to children of the favored class, but the Common Schools, even in cities

[?]  
1897

and town, were in most instances so mean in appearance and so wretched in character and appointments, and so barren in useful results, that private schools of a scarcely higher grade were patronized by all save the miserably poor. Methods of teaching resolved themselves into haphazard or the rule of thumb, and in school government moral suasion was as yet unknown. Robust or muscular pedagogy was then much in vogue, and children at school were accustomed to take their daily canings almost as much as a matter of course, and as regularly as they took their daily meat. Nor were the teachers then always fastidious as to the instrument of punishment used. In western Toronto there still linger awful legends of a public school teacher of that period who was much in the habit of curling his wooden arm, both as a switch for the unruly and as a pedagogic persistence wherewith to hammer the three R's into unaccepting scholars--probably addressing his striking appeals to the head, as being the shortest way to the intelligence. And the legends in question, no doubt somewhat exaggerated, relate to breezes that occasionally arose when the arm took at the end of the artificial limb, by inadvertence, knocked out a few teeth or broke a nose or scraped off an ear, or put out an eye. In rural sections things were quite as bad, or worse. The teachers were practically uneducated, and almost universally incompetent. The schools were generally one-room shanties, uninclosed, and without appearances of any kind of pretense even of furniture, save that of the rudest and most primitive description, while the whole text-book outfit of an entire school would not unfrequently consist of a few Fox's charts, a Gough or a Wallingham's arithmetic, and a Mayor's spelling book. Happily, if the school were above the ordinary run, or had any special claim of literary pretensions, a choice copy of Fox's "Book of Martyrs," or of The Spectator, or of Bulwer's "Pamerson," might be found in use in the highest reading class, to be taken lock passing in succession to each reader, and the long words were clapped as equally unpronounceable by the ignorant and illiterate. This may sound like romance, but I am speaking from experience. First, this experience was limited to the only two schools I attended, but it was my good or evil lot to attend in my boyhood, but, as there was both in the evening and the isolated Township of Whitechurch, one of the new wealthy and ambitious inspectors of my friend, Mr. [unclear], they may, I presume, be accepted as fair samples of the [unclear] and [unclear] existing. If there one was taught, or rather, was [unclear] [unclear] by a striking out rule, whose strength lay in his frequent and [unclear] use of needless phrases, and whose weakness con-

sister in his too great devotion to whiskey, profanity and tobacco. The  
 other was conducted by Tom Kelly—a large-hearted little cripple from  
 “across the way,” who was a cobbler by trade and a teacher by profession,  
 and who carried on both occupations simultaneously in the schoolroom.  
 He would half-sole a pair of boots while hearing a class read, and would  
 put a neat patch on a shoe while giving out a column of spelling. Poor  
 Kelly was afflicted with some “trouble in his vitals,” for which he had  
 to secretly take “doctor’s stuff,” which he procured from a little brown jug  
 locked up in his desk. Every now and then, when his vitals were un-  
 usually bad, he had to unlock the desk so frequently and take so much of  
 the “doctor’s stuff” that the little brown jug would give out, and then  
 our teacher would become “spachless and all sthruck of a hape,” and in  
 the state we would have to carry him home and put him to bed. Such  
 were not unfrequently the school experiences of fifty years ago. Teachers  
 and schools of higher repute were to be found, but they were exceptions  
 to the rule. Indeed, no words of mine can convey a more vivid portraiture  
 of the literary and social status of the Public School teachers of that day  
 than is incidentally and very unintentionally afforded by a single para-  
 graph of the formal protest then made by the Gore District Council  
 against the Chief Superintendent’s project for establishing a Normal  
 School for the training and better education of teachers. That important  
 public body protested against the expenditure of public moneys for the  
 support of a Normal School, on the ground that the scheme would prove  
 inoperative, since (giving the words as nearly as I can recollect them),  
 “For its supply of Common School teachers Upper Canada will have to  
 depend in the future, as it has done in the past, upon discharged soldiers,  
 and those who from physical or other disability are unable to gain a  
 livelihood by any other means.”

### Beginnings of Revolution.

It belongs not to me to dwell upon the revolution in educational  
 affairs which followed the opening of the Normal School, or  
 upon the admirable work done by its early as well as by its later graduates.  
 Myself, an ex-Normalite of that period, and otherwise intimately related  
 to our graduates as a body, I can scarcely hope to be accepted as an impar-  
 tial witness in their behalf. That they did grand mission work is, how-  
 ever, conceded by all. They were the zealous and faithful apostles of the  
 newer educational regime. Wherever they secured a foothold in the  
 land they became the exemplars of higher educational aims and of better

educational results, and the unwearied advocates of a larger educational liberality. If during the earlier years of the half century success does not seem to have followed as closely on the heels of effort as at present, let us remember that teachers then had to contend with difficulties which happily no longer exist. Expansion of school curriculum and improvement in school technique were naturally then of slow growth, since among self-governed people, such as ours, all movement in that direction is measurably dependent on a developed public opinion for its support. Our early graduates builded as well as they were able, did the best it was possible to do with their materials and opportunities. Perhaps their most arduous and most effective work was done quite outside the range of school routine. They had to preach and make possible the gospel of a free education to all. They had to win success in the face of some active and if much passive opposition. They had to move the multitude, to overcome the misperceptions of the masses. They had to break down the prejudices of the people. They had to proselytize those with whom they came in contact. They had to energize the trustees and to relax their too tightly drawn corporate purse-strings. They were met everywhere with no abstractness, but "en bono." They had to bear with whatever of equanimity they could command, not only the unrelenting criticisms of the ill-tempered, but with the fussy and ignorant interference of pretentious friends, and especially of those in authority. When forty years ago I ventured to devote an occasional hour to zoological and botanical excursions with my classes along the Hamilton mountain side a kindly intimated and influential member of the board remonstrated with me against what he feared would be regarded as a very sinful waste of valuable time on purely frivolous pursuits, adding, that, in his opinion, if such things had to be learned at all, it should be from proper text-books. Then and there I was so strongly placed in my position that I could and I did persist in my methods of teaching these subjects, but I was in that respect exceptionally fortunate. I am quite sure that in most places a teacher who then presumed to send or take his classes afield on botanical rambles in search of plants and flowers, such rambles as are now prescribed by the regulations and organized in every school, would have been looked upon as an educational crank, if not as an educational lunatic, and would in all probability have been summarily dismissed by his irate trustees, as being too lazy himself to look up garden sage for his own dinner or posies for his own buttonhole.

### Early Normal Graduates.

Each succeeding year, however, witnessed an improvement in the sentiments of the community on matters relating to the Public Schools and by degrees the trials and annoyances of Normal School graduates became proportionately less grievous to bear. Let us then with kindling emotions and with grateful appreciation, remember the pioneers of our brotherhood—the devoted men and women who, with unflagging zeal and with conspicuous intelligence, cleared the way for the better things now within the teacher's reach. In an humble way they each and all left their impress for good on their day and generation. Many of them were sooner or later won to other but not to higher pursuits, and whether they embraced law, medicine or divinity, or entered into mercantile or other departments of business life, or devoted themselves to literature or to art, to agriculture or to politics, I am proud to know that they, almost invariably, climbed high and left the mark of good work and notable achievement on their chosen vocations. Some died in harness, teaching to the end, still alas! living not long enough to see, otherwise than by the eye of faith, the assured dawn of the brighter educational day, in the rosy glow of whose yet early morning hours we are here now assembled. But although the lowly log or frame school houses, sanctified by their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, their struggles and their triumphs, their patient labors and their ill-requited toil, may have given place to costly brick or stone temples dedicated to learning; and although the effacing finger of time, the weight of revolving years, may have already flattened the mounds over their unmarked graves, let us not, on this auspicious occasion, forget them or refuse to recognize their claims or neglect to pay tribute to their faithful well-doing in the day of smaller possibilities in which their lots were cast.

Nor may we, even in this cursory glance at the work and influence of the Normal School in its earlier life, omit all reference to the revered father of the Public School system of Ontario, Dr. Ryerson laid and established the shapely and solid foundations on which the present Minister of Education is so wisely and so acceptably continuing to build, modeling and erecting and perfecting his particular story of that noble superstructure which must increasingly become the pride and glory of the people. This institution was not only the first fruits and the most admirable outcome of Dr. Ryerson's enlightened policy, it was ever the cherished object of his solicitude and love. Here, therefore, within these rooms,

wherein the unseen shade of his gracious presence and the silent echoes of his much loved voice may be said yet to linger, let his memory be kept forever green. His life was an inspiration and a quickening spur to those who were privileged to associate with him, and to know him well, and to them and to thousands upon thousands of his grateful fellow countrymen his name will always remain the synonym of fervid patriotism and of executive wisdom and power, and of large-hearted humanity, and of Canadian manhood, and of Christian gifts and graces. Nationally, we are quite too close to him as yet to clearly perceive the grandeur and loftiness of his public personality. The future will esteem him much more highly than the present, will regard him as unquestionably the greatest Canadian of the century, and will accord him such lasting honors that, long after the brazen effigy of his person which ornaments these grounds shall have crumbled into the dust of the ages, his name and the grand results of his life-work shall still endure. Peace to his ashes. May our Canadian youth never cease to emulate his virtues or to strive to attain to the measure of his glorious individuality.

#### Retrospect and Prospect.

To a brief statement of my impressions regarding some of the educational aspects of the present I proceed with much diffidence. For twenty-five years past my attention has been engrossed by my present pursuits, my energies have been devoted to the daily routine of medical reading and medical practice. During all those years I have found but little leisure in which to keep myself familiar with the trend of modern educational thought, or with the ever changing phases of modern educational development and technique. Hence, to-day, in the presence of an audience composed largely or wholly of those hot from the educational workshops or the educational directorate of the land, I am oppressed with feelings nearly akin to those which perplex a traveller, who, grown grey in foreign climes, has just returned to his own, his native land, and is there confronted with changes and evolutions and developments which almost amount to revolution. His once well-known landmarks are set back or swept away. His trusted standards of comparison are superseded by newer ideals or by larger actualities. Even the modes of thought, and turns of expression, and fashions of speech, erst in use, have become so altered that his own vernacular now strangely halts upon his unaccustomed tongue. And thus, standing among once familiar surroundings, where it may be in the past he was wont to speak *ex cathedra*, he is now weighted

with a strange and a mortifying consciousness of inaptitude and uncertainty, which prompt him to be wisely silent. And yet, sir, on this occasion and in this presence, I feel that silence on my part might be misconstrued. I bow to the inevitable, and am quite content to be regarded as an old young man, or if you so prefer it, as a young old man, but I am not content to be regarded as having yet arrived at that stage of senility when a man becomes all retrospect and is no longer anything better than what Horace terms "*Laudator temporis acti*." Nor am I disposed to lay myself open to the imputation of being either so ungenerous as to withhold my poor meed of praise from, or too generous to frankly express my disapproval of, whatever in the newer educational dispensation may, to my judgment, appear to merit the one or the other.

### Progressive Regulations.

It appears to me that no particular pertaining to the departmental evolution of the past twenty-five years more obtrusively challenges comment from one who has been out of harness for that length of time than the fluent character of both the legal enactments and the departmental regulations that now conjointly determine the educational *modus agendi* of the Province. The more or less rigid conservatism of former years seems to have given place, not only to a more prompt adoption of obvious improvements and needed reforms, but to what may, perhaps, in some instances, be termed a tentative groping after better things. At first view I was inclined to look upon this want of fixity in enactment and administration as a defect in the system. More careful consideration, however, leads me to regard it as an evidence of vitality and progress rather than of weakness or vacillation. It may, I think, be accepted as showing how quickly amenable the department is to public opinion when conveyed to it through legitimate channels. The community influences the educational executive in many ways, but chiefly through the press, the Legislature and the inspectorate. It is gratifying to know that, upon the whole, the press has given the department a generous support. Except at periods of political excitement, it rises superior to party proclivities, and during the past fifty years, and especially during the past twenty-five years, it has done noble work for the furtherance of the educational interests of the Province. The leading newspapers of the day may be only self-appointed educational assessors, but they are none the less valuable or influential on that account, and, as a rule, they have not

abused their power, or been heedless of their responsibilities, or deaf to the call of duty. Their appraisements of school laws and regulations and methods and results are, except when obviously warped by party bias or written with party intent, of great service in keeping the administration in close touch with the people. Their suggestions, often acted on, are frequently of much practical value. Not always so, however, and the fact that inspiration derived from this source is not uniformly plenary in kind, may, perhaps explain why, in some instances, enactment has been followed by repeal. Even the adverse criticisms of the party press, sometimes rather free and always quite pointed, may not be an unmixed evil, if, indeed, they be an evil at all. In my opinion they are not an evil but a necessary and valuable feature of the system as it now exists. If newspapers in this way dispense more strychnine than sugar, they administer it only in small doses, and, though bitter in taste, it exerts an excellent tonic effect. When the strictures thus made touch real evils or suggest real improvements, reform or adoption, sooner or later, inevitably follows, and when they are *vox et praterea nihil* they probably serve the Minister as an unfailing antidote against the malady called "swelled head," which occasionally attacks those that live on the mountain tops and who are too exclusively fed on party exhilarants. By the joint efforts of the two sections of the press the Minister of Education certainly enjoys the unique privilege of being the best painted man in the Dominion. He is painted from every conceivable and from every inconceivable standpoint, and in every known and every unknown shade of color. If the artists of one political camp dip their brushes only in rose-pink and sky-blue, those of the other camp only use plain black and white, and especially black. He is not likely to ever pine and grow thin from stress of repeating Burns' ardent inspiration:—

"Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us  
To see oursel's as others see us,  
It wad frae mony a blunder free us."

He has probably long ago lost his own identity and forgotten how he ever looked to himself through his own eyes. The very freedom with which such adverse criticisms are hurled at him may possibly serve to keep the departmental atmosphere strongly charged with tensional electricity or patriotic thinking, and high resolve, and heroic doing, since it constantly reminds him and his subordinates that:—

"If there's a hole in a' your coats  
I rede you tent it ;  
A chiel's amang you takin' notes,  
And, faith he'll prent it."

### The Education Department.

But, although the Minister comes in touch with the community at many points, the Public and High School Inspectors are the official tentacula by which he grasps and apprehends, are the especial agents through and by whom he perceives and acts. He is the brain, the executive, the central intelligence of the system : they are its afferent and efferent, its sensory and motor nerves, not only carrying the instructions and behests of the department to teachers and trustees, but also gathering up from these and from other peripheral sources intimations of public and professional approval, or the reverse, and impressions concerning the existing condition and tendency of things, and the present and prospective requirements of the public service, and, either by formal reports, or by personal conference, promptly conveying these to the Minister for his information and guidance. When the efficient and thorough system of inspection which now prevails was first established by the late Chief Superintendent, I was satisfied that it would prove to be the key-stone and connecting bond of the whole, that the success and integrity of the entire educational chain would very largely depend upon the zeal and faithfulness with which the inspectors did their work. Time has but confirmed the correctness of my views in that respect, and we are now all agreed that it would be difficult to over-estimate the value of the educational services of these public officers, or to adequately express the obligations of the Province to them in that behalf. It is, I take it, an important part of their unspecified function to serve, as they were designed to serve, as a pledge of the intrinsic democratism of our Public School system. Appointed by the people through their elected representatives in County Council assembled, they are paid by the people, they are responsible to the people alone, they hold office only during the pleasure of the people, and yet as I have explained, they are at the same time so related to the department that, conjointly with their High School conferees, they inspire all or much of the school laws and regulations that are from time to time enacted. Thus it may be truly said that the very genius of our Public School system is democratism pure and simple. It may, indeed, be fairly questioned whether, even in any State of the American Union, the people have as potent and as controlling a voice in educational concerns as have the citizens of Ontario. In such a system mobility of regulation and enactment is inevitable, is the exponent of its progressiveness, is a proof of its vitality, is the measure of its adaptability to

the public service. To taboo all educational essay or trial would amount to educational stagnation, if not to retrogression. All that can be required to preserve the integrity and continuity of the system as a whole is that while the central authorities show, as they must show, a reasonable readiness to "prove all things" that seem to make for their betterment of educational concerns, they shall equally manifest a fixed resolve to only "hold fast that which is good."

### Education Made Practical.

I note with much pleasure the increased care taken to make the teaching, both in Public and High Schools, progressively more and yet more real and common-sense in its character. The course of instruction is more extended, the technique is improved and proportionately higher results are obtained. Of this, in my opinion, there can be no possible doubt. In this connection, both the department and the Province are to be congratulated on the greatly improved school equipment now provided by trustees. I can remember when it required all the insistence of the Educational Office to induce or to compel a board to supply its school with a paltry set of four or five maps and a few pictures of objects. I am credibly informed that now schools are almost universally well equipped; that each High School in the Province has not only a well-furnished laboratory, where every student has to learn whatever he acquires of chemistry practically, by self-conducted experiment and simple qualitative analysis, but also an ample set of philosophical apparatus, including a working telegraph, a working telephone, a working electro-motor, and other appliances for the practical teaching of science. I further learn with much satisfaction that, except as works of reference, text-books in the teaching of science are practically discarded. The student of botany is referred to the dead or living plant, is required to identify the specimen by name, to dissect and demonstrate its parts, to discuss its root, stem, leaves, flower, fruit and seed, its relations, properties and uses, and to correctly place it in the natural system of classification. The youthful biologist goes quite as deeply and as practically into the investigation of animal forms, and whether he is working on a mammal, bird, fish or reptile, or on one of the lower animal creations, he is required with scalpel and microscope to separate and examine the histological elements of each. Nor is it only in the natural sciences that real, as distinguished from perfunctory, teaching appears to be insisted upon. I observe with much approval that your regulations require your examiners in the languages, ancient and modern,

to test each pupil's knowledge by his ability to translate, and to grammatically analyze and discuss sight passages not included in the prescribed text. In English literature the intelligent and appreciative study of assigned English classics, by the aid of a living teacher, and the liberal memorization of their finest passages—invaluable as even this alone would be—is by no means all that is demanded. To test his knowledge and the quality of the teaching he has received, the examiners are here again required to prove him by sight passages not included in the assigned work, so as to gauge his ability to interpret and appreciate literature for himself. The course of book-keeping, I notice, is either general or special. The former aims at giving an ordinary knowledge of the subject such as is required by every one, while the latter is so full and is taught so practically that a pupil who takes it and secures the departmental commercial diploma is, I should say, fully competent to take his place forthwith at the accountant's desk. In stenography he is required to practice until he attains a rate of at least fifty words a minute. And, although approved typewriters are not yet supplied to each school, they and other good things will no doubt eventually get there.

### Public Schools Are Better.

My remarks in this connection may seem to apply more especially to High Schools, but I wish to say that, in my opinion, Public Schools are not a whit less worthy of praise than their more advanced sister institutions. An educational chain can be no stronger than its weakest link. That the Public Schools, in their limited sphere, do not form a weak link in our educational chain must, I think, be patent to all who take the trouble to look beneath the surface. Many of the best and most experienced teachers in the province are engaged in Public School work, and the realness and excellence of the teaching done there is freely attested by appreciative inspectors and trustees. Even the youngest third-class teacher employed in a Public School must have passed the departmental tests as to knowledge, must have spent the prescribed time in a training or Model School for instruction in the science and practice in the art of teaching, and must have obtained a certificate of qualification in these respects from a County Board of Examiners, while those with higher pretensions and more advanced certificates must have passed the higher departmental tests as to scholarship, must have spent one year at least in actual teaching, and subsequently thereto must have graduated from a Normal School. Both the literary and the professional competence of

Public School teachers is thus assured, and the vigor and the value of the work done by the inspectors I have already alluded to. That the results are eminently creditable to all concerned is altogether beyond any peradventure—is, in fact, shown by the remarkable success with which Public School pupils pass the successive tests for promotion from grade to grade, and for entrance into the High Schools. Considering the average age of the candidates, the High School entrance examination is quite a severe test, and it is rigorously applied. It appears to be a much more advanced test and a much more stringently applied test than it was twenty years ago. Yet the Public Schools now send up more than twice as many candidates for this examination as they did then, and of those sent up 61 per cent. now pass, while twenty years ago only 52 per cent. were successful. If these facts mean anything they mean that the Public Schools do more work and do better work now than they did twenty years ago.

### System of Examinations.

One of the most distinctive, and, in my opinion, one of the most admirable features of the educational present is the comprehensive and thorough system of examinations now controlled by the department. I can recollect their comparatively humble origin. Forty years ago the Hamilton School Board commissioned me to spend a few weeks looking into the city Public School systems of New York, Pennsylvania and the New England States. Of the different educational centres I then visited, the school system of Boston was reputedly, and, I think, actually, the best. On my return home I graded the Central School, and introduced grade limit tables and promotion tests similar to those used in Boston, but more thoroughly applied. These were subsequently adopted in the Provincial Model School, and were officially prescribed for use in all graded Public Schools. In due time they were extended and made to apply to Grammar or High Schools and Collegiate Institutes. Ultimately they became expanded to their present phenomenal proportions by the absorption of the County Board and Normal School academic tests for teachers' certificates, and the matriculation tests of the different Universities, technical colleges and schools, and learned professions. The latter functions were, doubtless, largely imposed upon the department by outside pressure. Of this my own profession furnishes a notable instance. The Medical Council, of which I have the honor to be an elected member, formerly held its own examinations for matriculation in medicine, through two appointed examiners, one at Kingston and the other at Toronto. The

examination cost the candidate \$10 in place of the \$5 now paid, or, taking into consideration the travelling expenses, often from remote parts of the Province to these centres, it involved, in many cases, four or five times as great an outlay as at the present. The examinations were otherwise unsatisfactory, and the council decided to accept in lieu of them one or other of the departmental tests then in force. It has never seen cause to regret its decision to that effect, and to-day such is our confidence in the realness and absolute value of the departmental examinations that the representative members of the Council would not willingly set aside the departmental certificate in favor of any unlimited University qualification, even up to and inclusive of a degree in arts. Practical educationists know very well that the dependence to be placed on the certificate or diploma or degree in arts of any institution is determined, not chiefly by the face value of its requirements or by the extent or parade of its curriculum, but by the thoroughness and stringency with which its examination tests are applied. Our objection, in the Medical Council, to accept University standing as qualifying for matriculation means, not that we have no confidence in any University, but that when eight or ten Universities become competing bodies, so far as medical matriculation is concerned, there is no surety that their tests are equally applied—we know that in the past the tests of some were applied with discreditable laxity—and consequently, as we dare not discriminate, University standing, in this connection, represents to us an unknown or a variable quantity. We know also that the drift of candidates is always towards the least exacting examining body. Hence our fixed resolve to stand by the departmental tests, and it is no secret that other technical colleges and other professions take the same stand as the Medical Council in this matter. I have only to add that, in my opinion, the Departmental Examinations are the touchstone, as the Inspectorate is the keystone, of the entire educational system of the Province, and that neither can be tampered with without gravely marring the integrity and efficiency and equipoise of the whole. The decentralization of teachers' examinations and of those of University and profession matriculants, due to the present plan of making each High School a centre at which candidates may write, has undoubtedly been a boon to all. I may, perhaps be permitted to add in this connection that it would be a concession generally appreciated by the public to increase by at least one-half the time assigned to each paper at these examinations. There are many reasons which readily suggest themselves to practical teachers why, if the department errs here at all, it should be on the side of over-liberality.

It is unquestionably a fact that, with more time, hundreds of candidates would make better showing than they do now, and thus, in many cases, unintentionally unjust rating would be avoided.

There are other features of the educational system at present in force which seem to me to merit unqualified approval, but I have no time now to discuss them. I particularly regret that I am thus precluded from saying some of the good things I have in my heart to say about the kindergarten which has since my day been incorporated into the system. I remember, however, with great pleasure that the very last lectures on education I had the honor to deliver in this institution twenty-six years ago were devoted to a description of the kindergarten and to the advocacy of its early introduction into our cities and towns.

### Stagnation Means Decadence.

Are we to conclude, then, that our school system is faultless? Happily no. Not that, by any means. Imperfection is the hallmark of mundane affairs. Progressive institutions, like progressive individuals, live and grow strong by effort, by constantly struggling to attain to higher phases of existence. If by any chance an institution ever reaches perfection, there is for it no more struggle, decadence sets in, and death by cardiac failure, or by senile gangrene, or by general paresis closes the scene. I trust, therefore, that our school system is not yet within 1,000 years of perfection. If time served, I would like to point out several particulars in which it is more or less faulty. I can only now shortly indicate two or three of these. For instance, I am not altogether in accord with the complete divorcement of the academic and pedagogic functions in our Normal Schools. That formerly the energies of the school were far too largely devoted to academic work I readily admit. Nevertheless the other extreme may be found to be equally a mistake. There are, I take it, sound pedagogic reasons why these institutions should still do a limited amount of academic work. I think those reasons are so imperative that they must eventually force their own recognition, and I venture to predict that a longer experience of the present system will lead to a partial restoration of the feature now so rigorously excluded.

I strongly approve of the recent change made in the personnel of the County Boards of Examiners, yet I am not quite satisfied with the constitution of these boards. The certificate of the board is a legal authorization to teach and the examination leading thereto should undoubtedly be in the hands of teachers and inspectors. Doctors, lawyers and

clergymen are possessed of varied and multiplied excellencies, among which, however, are not special qualifications to serve on county boards. And seeing how sensitively jealous these professions are of any outside interference with their own guild rights and immunities, I am only surprised that they did not long ago themselves protest against being placed in a position where they were compelled to do unto others as they would not that others should do unto them. It would, in my opinion, be a still further improvement to throw, for examination purposes, two or three adjacent counties into one so as to make the joint board a larger body. And to make it still more independent of local influences, which tend to relax, which, in this case, strongly tend to relax, vigor and stringency of function, it may be found necessary to give one or more appointees of the department seats in each of these joint county boards as a guarantee to both the public and the central authorities that these examinations, which are certainly not the least important in the whole series, are real and not merely perfunctory.

#### He Discourages Cramming.

I have no sympathy with the cry that the department encourages cramming in the High Schools. As far as I can interpret the spirit and intent of the departmental regulations and instructions to examiners, every possible preventive measure that can be adopted is explicitly enjoined, and moreover, the eminently real and practical teaching done in the High Schools would seem of itself to render cramming in most subjects impossible. And, further, in the few subjects, such as history and geography, in which cramming might be resorted to, the peculiar forms of the questions given on the examination papers would seem designed to preclude anyone who had merely crammed for the test from passing it at all. But while there is not and cannot be much cramming in the only sense in which careful people use that term, there can be, and I fear there is, a very lamentable amount of ever study in connection with High School work. I regard this as the worst feature of the entire system, but I am not very clear as to where the responsibility rests or what remedy can be applied to prevent or to lessen the evil. Yet, system, sir, is an eminently successful system. I doubt whether more work or better work is accomplished in Public and High Schools anywhere else in the world. I will go further and say I doubt whether as much good work is done anywhere else in schools of a similar grade. But to accomplish these desirable results your schools are run at high pressure. Your system is

designed to take out of both teachers and taught all there is in them. The educational dilettanteism which so largely prevails to the south of us finds no place here. Our American neighbors run what may be termed a decorated educational accommodation train, where we run an every day express. Our educational conductors and engine drivers are earnest, keen-eyed, hard-fisted men in work-a-day clothes, who mean business and are bound to run their trains on time. I have the pleasure of knowing many of our High School masters personally or by repute. In scholarly attainments and knowledge of their profession, in zeal and in faithful discharge of duty, they are, I know, easily the peers of the best men of their class elsewhere in the world. We have much reason to be proud of them. I know that some, I believe that many, deplore this tendency to over-study, and do their best to prevent it, but the remedy lies not with them. The evil is perhaps inherent to any advanced school curriculum vigorously pursued. Your course of study is necessarily arranged so as to meet the requirements of students of fair or average ability. Unfortunately there are in every school some pupils of less than average ability, who can only keep up with the class by extra work. If their inferiority is marked, the extra work may become excessive. It is true that pupils can vegetate in the High School for years without writing for any examination whatever, but neither they nor their parents want that. The former are self-impelled to over exertion by a not unnatural anxiety to do as well as others. The great factor, however, in promoting over-study on the part of High School pupils is, I fear, a sort of domestic *vis a tergo*—the pressure brought to bear on them by ambitious or injudicious parents, who are loath to believe that their family half-pint pots are not just as capacious as neighboring family pint or quart pots. The head masters, as I have said, discourage over-study. They do it, to their great honor, because somewhat to their own detriment; for, unhappily their own efficiency and success are largely measured by the results they reach at these examinations. Parents and trustees watch for the annually published lists and eagerly scan them, in order to compare their schools and their teachers with those of other districts, and, if any marked falling off appears, unpleasantness of various kinds and degrees is sure to follow. It would appear, then, that, as the responsibility for over-study rests chiefly or wholly with the people themselves, its remedy or prevention also lies chiefly in their hands.

### Remedies Suggested.

Experience and a keener appreciation of parental responsibility may, in time, teach the lesson that it is often a father's duty here, to put down the brakes in place of turning on more steam, and the family physician frequently has it in his power to offer wise counsels in this respect. And I am glad to be able to record my conviction that my professional confreres seldom or never neglect to point out the dangers of over mental application. The department can apparently do little more than has been done to prevent its necessity. The separation of the matriculation and junior leaving examinations into parts 1 and 2, which may be passed separately and in different years is evidently a concession to students of less than average capacity, but further relief in that direction is clearly barred by the risk of running into the burlesque of "education, with examinations on the instalment plan." One can see several possible ways out of the difficulty, but none without hazard of grave injury to the integrity and value of the whole system. For instance, if the annual lists were published, as a whole, in strict alphabetical order, and not by districts or schools, over-study, or much of it, would at once cease, but in that case I fear that our fast educational express would be apt to degenerate in a mere decorated accommodation train. He who may be able to devise a scheme which shall prevent all over-study without at the same time hobbling the progress of those with average or with superior abilities will richly deserve the thanks of every one.

Of our Public School system I have only to add that, as far as rural sections are concerned, it has probably, in its present shape, reached the limit of its usefulness, and that unless it be materially altered it will not likely prove equal to the requirements of the future. To be prepared to compete in the keen commercial and industrial struggle of the twentieth century, farmers' sons and daughters will unquestionably need an educational equipment which in kind and in extent the present system cannot supply, and was never intended to supply. This difficulty has cropped up in other lands, and, so far, only two solutions have been tentatively put forward. One is the creation of special schools; the other is the amplification of existing schools. Not the least important objections to the creation of special schools are, first, the deterioration or degradation of ordinary Public Schools which would inevitably result; and second, the improbability that they could be established in sufficient number to better reach the requirements of the rural population than they are now

served by the High Schools. The amplification of all Rural Public Schools would involve the obliteration of [school] sections as they now exist, and the subdivision of a township into only three or four districts in place of the sixteen or twenty now obtaining. This plan would secure to townships all the benefits of graded schools, would obviate the present waste of teaching energy, and would admit of a very material extension of the school course of study. Its adoption would probably involve, as it does in some of the New England States, the carrying of distant pupils to and from school at the public expense, but that outlay would be trifling compared with the saving effected by having to equip and maintain only three or four schools in place of sixteen or twenty. The problem of making the Public Schools equal to the new demands made upon them may be regarded as the most important now before the Education Department, and he who solves it satisfactorily, and secures therewith the indispensable concurrence of the people, will do a grand work, and will deserve honor second only to that conferred upon Dr. Ryerson himself.

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