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17.10.84

Dear Dr. Curtis

I have been thinking of writing to you for the last year upon the subject of the method of examining the Intermediate Schools and Schools in practical subjects such as Experimental & Natural Sciences and Music. It is, I think, evident that the teaching of practical subjects i.e. subjects in which the student ~~ought to~~ ^{should be able} do more than write and draw, is becoming daily of more and more importance in the eyes of those who are directing the education of the world and it is a very serious question how to test this kind of teaching. Take the case of music for instance. Unless & students really appreciate what the symbols mean it is simply ridiculous to teach them to avoid consecutive fifths etc in composition. They had ~~first~~ better spend time on something that they can really know than in pretending to know what they can't ~~know~~ ^{learn}. This teaches them ~~to~~ ^{to tolerate} dishonesty ^{as to} ~~of mind in respect of~~ of what they know, ~~which~~ ^(state of affairs) is a totally and absolutely mischievous. It has been proposed to bring up the candidates in these subjects to Dublin and examine them there but it would certainly be much easier and more convenient to have periodic examinations. There is no real necessity for ~~all~~ the children in Ireland to be examined at the same time especially in subjects where the mode of performing certain ~~these~~ operations is what is tested and not the answer to any set of questions. ~~Let~~ There is no necessity for every school being asked exactly the same things. Let each center know at what time the examiners in any given subject will arrive.

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and ~~they~~ will arrange their time tables so as to have their scholars made up for that subject at that time of year. ~~of great difficulty~~
~~as regards the ages of the scholars~~. As it would be quite possible to examine in as many centers as could possibly be required, I don't say demanded, in Ireland in two or three months in spring I don't think any difficulty should be raised about the ages of the scholars. I know that there are considerable difficulties attending this scheme as for instance getting competent examiners but I don't believe there are any difficulties which cannot be got over sufficiently well to make some such system infinitely preferable to the present abominable method of examining in practical subjects. If a satisfactory system can be arranged it will be I believe ~~for the advancement of very great service to the country.~~
~~for the advancement of a very great advantage.~~

It will be possible to really test both the education of the candidates and the means ^{of teaching them} at the disposal of the schools ~~for teaching~~, ~~the best for the~~ certainly no school insufficiently equipped should get any grant on account of teaching such subjects. The education of a large part of the youth of Ireland is in your hands and if they grow up unqualified unsupplied with the ^{education required to} ~~subject~~ ^{therefore to} accommodate ~~the~~ laws of nature to their service they ~~will~~ will suffer in the race of life as those only suffer who ~~are ground~~ ^{suffer under} natures laws. The competition of those better trained will simply ^{grind} ~~tax~~ them out of existence. It is the glory of the great to foresee ~~the~~ and notwithstanding difficulties to make wise provision for the future.

Yours very truly

Geo. - Fras. Fitzgerald