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WE CALLED ATTENTION last week to the condition of affairs in the New York City Board of Education, and chronicled the triumph of political chicanery over public interest in the organization of the board for the coming year. Inasmuch as this situation in New York is of the greatest importance to educational interests all over the land, we shall revert to it from time to time, and endeavor to aid in forming an intelligent and conscientious public opinion which shall eventually displace the politicians and the politics that are now controlling the schools of the metropolitan city. The next contest will be over the report of the special committee on reform in the schools, the first instalment of which is now before the board, for action at its next meeting. The report is signed by Commissioners Webb, Cole, Sprague, O'Brien, Agnew, Dodge, Galloway, and Schmitt. It limits its consideration to a single point, and that perhaps the fundamental abuse of the New York City system; namely, the examinations of the children, as made by the city superintendent and his assistants, for the purpose of marking and grading the teachers and principals in the respective classes and schools. The committee believe—and we cordially indorse that belief—that many of the existing evils in the schools are the outgrowth and natural sequence of the methods now employed in a vain attempt to ascertain the true character of classroom work. The vicious system which is now in vogue has not (happily) the

sanction of any statute; but it has been built up by the present city superintendent and his predecessors, on the meagre provisions of a single by-law of the Board of Education itself.

This is the committee's account of the system: "The city superintendent or his assistants examine, orally and in writing, the children of every class in every school at least once a year. When the examination is to be made, a notice, varying in time from one to six days, is sent to the principal and teachers. The *average* time that the examiners spend with each class does not exceed half an hour. The main object of the examination of the pupils is to grade and mark the teachers, and to determine with what degree of success the classroom work is carried on. Marks are given by the examiners to the teachers on each subject; but the teachers are not informed what marks are awarded, nor is any provision made by which such information may be conveyed to them. The general results are reported to the trustees of the respective wards in which the teachers are employed; but as to how such results are reached, or in what particular subject a class may have failed, the record is silent. The teachers know that these marks (if they receive any attention) will form the basis upon which promotion, or worthiness for promotion, is to be determined. They know that in case of illness, when it may be necessary to come before the board, if the marks are below a certain standard, the salary expected may be seriously diminished; and that, in case two marks of 'fair' are awarded in succession, a summons will be received to appear before a committee of the board and answer to a charge of inefficiency as a teacher. At times, to the young, nervous, or inefficient teacher, the examination is a positive bugbear, and the examiner a natural enemy; and this estimate is speedily detected and shared in by the pupils. In such a class the examiner is not looked to for help, suggestion, or instruction; but he is regarded as one from whom all faults and weaknesses must be diligently concealed, and before whom the children are to make as brilliant a show as possible. His sole purpose is to assign a mark for each study, and that mark is to go down on the official record, to aid or mar the teacher's future advancement in the system."

This is the barbarous practice by which the executive officers control the schools and intimidate the teachers. Its mere statement is sufficient indictment. What are you going to do about it? say its beneficiaries. The committee is ready with an answer. After adequate examination, divide the teachers once and for all into two grades,—maximum and standard. All teachers who have been at least five years in the system, and who satisfy the principals with whom they have served, and the city superintendent (or, if they fail to agree, the committee of the Board of Education on teachers), are to be classed as maximum grade, and relieved of future examinations by the superintendent or his assistants, unless the principal reports that such a teacher is falling off and should be subjected to inspection. All other teachers shall be classed as standard grade, and shall receive not only visits of inspection, but help, from the assistant superintendents, in order to aid them in improving their work and in passing to the higher classification. The committee elaborates this principle, and reports the necessary amendments to the by-laws of the board, to place it in operation. The recommendations should be adopted, although it is reported that the "ring" will oppose them bitterly. We shall await the vote with interest.

THE VALUE OF MERCURIC CHLORIDE AS A DISINFECTANT.

IN *Science*, xii. p. 185, we quoted at considerable length from an article by Dr. W. B. Hills of Cambridge, Mass., which first appeared in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, in which the author of the article criticised in severe terms the recommendations of the committee on disinfectants, of the American Public Health Association, with reference to the use of mercuric chloride as a