

ming. It was forced feeding, which had no relation to the nature of the mind, and the food rammed down was indigestible. After a long time, he says, some of it was, indeed, partially digested by the much enduring mental stomach; but this was in spite, not by virtue of the system. The system was, by its nature, destructive of digestion; and though it did not ultimately destroy, it permanently injured, the digestive organs. In one of these works he gives a graphic description of cramming by comparing it to the process by which a boa constrictor is fed. Once a fortnight the boa is ready for a meal, and accordingly a goat is given him. By slow degrees this tremendous morsel finds its way down the creature's gullet, and in due time what was goat becomes boa—is incorporated, and assimilated. Up to the point at which the bolus is stuffed down into its destined receptacle, Mr. Thompson finds a considerable resemblance between the two processes; but there, he says, the resemblance ends. The boa's meal, after all, does get digested; but the goat stuffed into the human boa in many cases never gets digested at all, and people go about, all their lives with the undigested goat in their stomachs, or, at least, with large limbs of it which have never been assimilated, and therefore, instead of invigorating the system, lie like a dead weight burdening and oppressing it. Even you (I can certainly speak of myself) have at this very moment, there is no doubt, in your mind big lumps of undigested goat, and much of the mental dyspepsia, and the consequent weakness and incapacity for intellectual action of which you are sometimes conscious, is ultimately due to the boa constrictor cramming of early days. (1)

In fact, it is rare to meet with a man who has fully digested his goat, and in the case of children under instruction infinitely rarer still. But surely this is only another way of saying that they have been crammed, not naturally fed (for what may be very suitable for a boa is certainly not necessarily suitable for a human being), and that the infrequency of sound digestion testifies to the frequency of cramming.

I remember myself reading long ago, I think in Mungo Parke's travels, an account of the fashion in which, some where in Africa young girls are prepared for the matrimonial market. They are drenched every morning with enormous draughts of butter-milk, which the mothers, stick in hand, compel them to swallow. The object is to make them fat, and therefore beautiful; and when they are so obese that they are unable to walk, the end is gained—they are beautiful for ever! All their active powers are extinguished, they are made inert and stupid; and this is the triumph of cramming. I need not stop to point out that similar results are often seen in the parallel case of drenching children with floods of words, which however do not always tend to fatten though they do frequently produce sluggishness and stupidity.

But to return to our enquiry. It appears that no teacher owns to cramming, and yet that the practice extensively prevails. In order, then, to bring the matter to a practical test, I ask you who are now before me, every one of whom has gone through a school course, were you, or were you not, crammed at school? Was the food supplied such as you had a relish for, and such as you could and did digest? That is the question. I will answer for myself, though possibly my own experience may not precisely correspond to yours. I remember as if it was yesterday, though it is considerably more than half a century ago, that I was taught what was ridiculously called Geography, by being compelled, two or three times a week, to gulp down an inch of close black type from

Goldsmith's Manual, and to regurgitate it whole, just as I swallowed it, in the presence of the master. Not a question was asked, no reference to a map even hinted at, not a single idea gained from it. The consequence was, of course, that I never learned Geography at all. It was the same with other things. I was dosed with columns of spelling, with pages of words with "meanings" which had no meaning to me, and the Arithmetic was a dreary grind of mechanical operations which I performed by word of command, without having the least idea of what I was about. Have you ever been victimised in this style? Perhaps not to the same extent, but yet I know perfectly well that, with some notable exceptions, you have all passed through a discipline of the same kind. It is, in fact, as rare to find a man who does not declare that he was crammed more or less at school, as it is to find a teacher who owns to being a crammer. This is surely a singular phenomenon! But I need not press my question home upon you. The evidence required to prove my case is only too abundant. Here are two or three specimens.

A child about 11 years of age, in one of our primary schools, was told by an Inspector to write down the "Duty towards God," which he had learnt from the Church Catechism. He wrote down, "My duty toads God is to bleed in him to fering and to loaf withold your arts withold my mine withold my sold and with my sernth to whirchp and to give thinks to put my old trast in him to call upon him to onner his old name and his world and to save him truly all the days of my life's end." &c. Don't you see here, plainly enough, the great lumps of undigested goat?

A little girl at school was once reading, in the presence of a visitor, a passage in which the word *dice* occurred, and was asked what it meant. To the surprise of the questioner, she replied, "Little cubs at play;" and on enquiry it was found that she had been crammed with columns of meanings, as they are called, and among them this, "*Dice*, little cubes used in gaming."

Another curious instance presents itself. In one of the western islands of Scotland a visitor to a primary school was requested to examine a particular scholar on the capitals of Europe. The boy named one after another with perfect correctness. It occurred to the visitor to ask the boy the name of the island in which he lived. He could not answer; and when at last the examiner said, "Now tell me what a capital is?" No answer. "Is it a man, or a beast?" "It's a beast," replied the boy, quite decisively.

A very short time ago, Mr. Meiklejohn, as the Examiner appointed by the Endowed Schools Commission for Scotland, asked a class of boys in English literature to state what they knew of Bacon's writings. They wrote respectively,—"Lord Bacon's principal work is the *Incompendium Organum*;" "Lord Bacon wrote the *Ovum Organum*;" "Lord Bacon wrote the *Instratione Magna*;" "His great work is *Imstrantio Magna*;" and the other answers to questions in English literature were of the same kind. In all these cases, the actual condition of the stomach shows, as plainly as if we had been present at the feeding, what sort of feeding it was. The goat had not even begun to be digested.

But it may be said that such instances as I have quoted are only to be found in inferior schools. If, however, we turn for a moment to the public schools, whose merits are eulogized by persons of authority (the late Bishop of Winchester, for instance), we find specimens of the same kind. The public tutors and examiners of Oxford and Cambridge declared in 1863 (at the time of the Public Schools Commission) that the average of youths entering the Universities from Public Schools were "badly

(1) The only German verb which answers to our "cram" is *einochsen*, to stuff with an ox—a every significant word.