

✻ ASSOCIATE EDITORIALS. ✻

NO human institution is perfect nor incapable of being perverted in use; accordingly, we need not expect absolute perfection in either the structure or the operation of our educational institutions. What we should expect, and are entitled to demand, is that imperfections should be reduced to a minimum, or, to be more explicit, that the regulative and educative forces should conflict as little as possible. When examinations are conducted in the proper spirit and in a rational manner, they are indispensable aids to education, as well as more or less effective regulators. When, however, the passing of examinations becomes an end in itself, instead of the means to a higher end, examinations are perverted in use. Nor do we see any sense in recommending the discontinuance of competitive examinations while advising the continuance of examinations in general. All examinations are necessarily competitive, since it is characteristic of human beings to seek an end, and hence to compete even against the possibility of failure. For this very reason, however, the introduction of artificial stimuli, such as prizes, scholarships and medals are often injurious in their effects, because they operate most forcibly upon those who naturally least require their stimulants. So long as the educational process is to be carried on in a systematic manner, and so long as fitness for the position of a public educator is to be determined by others than the candidates, so long must competitive examinations have a place in our educational system.

To discard examinations entirely because of one evil consequence, and that, as shewn above, incident to human nature, is, we think, like casting out one evil spirit and taking in seven others more wicked than it. It is because the formal examination is the last step in the educational process, and because on that very account defects are there and afterwards made manifest, that we are apt to credit examinations in themselves with the faults and failings of the whole system. The faults mainly lie in the mode of conducting and in the men who conduct examinations if they do not perform their true function. What are the true functions of examinations? We believe they may be classed under two main heads:—

1. Educative; 2. Regulative. An educative examination is a systematic inquisition into the individual's knowledge, either to discover its defects that they may be corrected and supplemented, or, in order to develop his mental power in the systematic rise of the facts of his knowledge. An official or regulative examination, on the other hand, seeks to discover the attainment or non-attainment of the candidate to a certain standard of knowledge with a view to his acceptance or rejection.

Much of the success of an examination depends upon the method adopted, especially when the aim is to discover the candidate's knowledge. The two methods are,

speaking generally, the oral and the written. Each has its peculiar merits and defects, and either, apart from the other, is very imperfect, both as a means of education and as a means of inquisition. Combined in due proportion, however, they are naturally complementary each to the other. The one great advantage that the written possesses over the oral is that, by means of it, the examination is made uniform for all candidates in any one class. Another advantage which it possesses is that, by it, the examiner is better able to estimate the general character of the mental culture possessed by the candidate. The general style of direction, the energy and clearness of thought displayed in answering a set of questions should, we think, count, in the general estimate, with accuracy in detail. Especially will this advantage be manifest if the nature of the questions asked be such as to throw the candidate upon his own resources for answers, to call forth his reasoning power, along with his memory power, rather than a mere rehearsal of book lore. It is of much more consequence to know what use an individual can make of the facts of his knowledge than to know how many of those facts he can reproduce on paper at the shortest notice. But more of this anon.

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Although this is an age of civilization and enlightenment, yet the ideas entertained in regard to culture are astonishing. Some people imagine that culture lies in intellectual acquirements. Others, of an artistic order, regard themselves cultured if they are able to play the piano well, paint or devour novels. While others still, of a puritanical or ascetic turn, deem it to lie in the keeping to the letter of the law, to the negation of anything of a sensuous or aesthetic nature.

Now it is our object to show that true culture consists, not in any one of these views, but in the truth implied in all three. These three sides, viz., the intellectual, aesthetic and moral, represent or constitute the whole nature of man. Now, a man who has three capacities, which are capable of infinite realization, since they are universal, and has only one developed, is clearly one-sided. Hence then, only when his three capacities or his three sides are developed to infinity can he be called a truly cultured man.

For universal development, however, he would require an infinite time in which to realize himself, and favorable circumstances, but man has neither. What then? Does he despair? No. He freely grasps by faith, which is a kind of knowledge, the universal implied in him, and rests with submissive will in the infinite spirit which is extended to him through Christ. He is then virtually universal and is able to do all things. Thus only is religion possible and Christianity any more than a name.

Now, be his development on the intellectual side, it has true value only when it is in line with eternal truth. Or be it on the aesthetic side, it has true value only when