

previous performances is better, for the examiner's judgment is confused by the great gaps in knowledge or attainment when he has to go straight from the good to the bad (from the strong to the feeble, as the French more aptly express it), or *vice versa*.

The papers then, by the plan I have suggested, are divided into four, five, or six piles. The examiner can take one of these piles and mark it at a single sitting. If he marks the first pile working downwards, he should take the following pile in inverted order. Thus his freshness of spirits will not always be given to one set of boys, and his jaded sleepiness or impatience to another set. In looking over his papers in this way, he will have no difficulty in remembering exactly what he has set, and the maximum mark he was awarded for each question. It is, moreover, an easier and more interesting task to intimate answers to the same question when one gets the answers altogether, than when they come mixed up in a crowd of other answers to other questions. One can work more quickly also; and this is a tremendous gain in the estimation of all examinees. Another great advantage to the teacher is this: he can ascertain how his pupils do in each division of the subject, and see by the marks registered under A, under B, under C, &c., whether they are weak in construing, or in grammar, or idioms, or in general knowledge of the subject. Another advantage is this: it sometimes happens that school arrangements compel a master to set a longer paper than is on other grounds desirable, and the pressure of work may be so great that time fails for proper correction of the whole paper, and yet the list must come out by a particular day. I should very much like to get behind the examiner and see what he does in such an emergency as this—an emergency which is by no means imaginary, but has arisen often, and will arise again. I have heard of conscientious examiners working away literally all night to make out a list which had to be published the next morning; and when I hear of feats of this kind, I cannot help reflecting that perhaps some examiners have not such highly-developed consciences, and moreover that the biggest conscience ever known could not have performed the functions of the nerves, or made its possessor as fit to judge of the merits of composition at the end of the twentieth hour's labour as he was at the end of the second. So I should like to see some safeguards provided against this tremendous stress of work at the end. If it were clearly announced on a paper that a certain division of it would not be marked as highly as the rest, and was not to be attempted till the examinee could do no more in other divisions, there would be no unfairness in leaving out this part altogether in looking the paper over. Where everyone has had time to do all he can, of course any part may be selected for omission without unfairness; but where there has been any hurry we can cut nothing out, for if we did we should not unfairly to a candidate who had written the answer to that question carefully, and had thus been prevented from doing better in a part of the paper to which we assigned marks.

In awarding marks, a question arises whether negative marks might not fitly be given for answers showing great stupidity or ignorance. Such marks are not usually given. As soon as the examinee has convinced himself that the answer is good for nothing, he passes on, and does not attempt any measurement in the negative direction. The consequence is, the examinees take shots, sometimes get marks they do not deserve, but more often expose their ignorance. By our ordinary method, the more dashing style of the boy who writes fast and covers plenty of paper is more successful than that of a careful boy who gets through much less writing, but

does his little well. Mr. Latham considers this point, and the conclusion he arrives at is, that if negative marks were given, a nervous student, fearing to damage himself by a bad blunder, might be prevented from attempting questions in which he would show himself to advantage. But Mr. Latham still thinks that bad spelling, bad grammar, and guesses which show utter ignorance, ought to involve some positive loss. But examiners, I should say, especially young examiners, are much too easily shocked by blunders, and infer too much ignorance from them. Some students have a nasty knack of blundering even in things they are quite familiar with (I speak feelingly here), and in some cases genuine knowledge may exist side by side with genuine ignorance that to an examiner seems totally inconsistent with it. Boys are familiar only with such parts of a subject as they have been carefully drilled in, and their knowledge in that area does not connote a knowledge of anything beyond; and when we reached the age of tolerance which may be said to begin at forty, we know too much of the blunders of grown people to be surprised at the mistakes of schoolboys. "*Notres ennemis*," for "*nos ennemis*," seems a very bad mistake to a teacher of French, and yet this blunder has been made by a man who was at all events the superior of the schoolboy—Sir Archibald Alison.

I would here point out the importance of our keeping a copy of every paper we ourselves have set. If these papers are arranged chronologically, they will afford us a rough autobiographical sketch of our teaching. We shall see the kind of thing that used to interest us, and then how our interests and our efforts changed. Perhaps an odd examination paper will remind us of an error of which we have fortunately got clear. But I am speaking now of examination papers set with such care that they are, as it were, the shadow of our teaching.

No time remains to discuss, as I had intended, the best way of setting papers in some other subjects. I have not had so much to do with the teaching of history and geography as I have with the teaching of languages, and I have not set many papers, or "testers," in these subjects. But when I look at the papers set by other people, I am sometimes a good deal perplexed. I cannot make out how the examiner settles the question of marks. Here, for instance, is a question from one of the Oxford or Cambridge Junior papers—"Draw outline map showing coast line of Europe from the mouth of the Danube to the Rhine, and mark the chief rivers and chief ranges of mountains between those two rivers and the coast." The last words—"the coast"—do not very clearly convey the examiner's meaning; but, putting the fault of ambiguity aside, I can't help thinking that some boy or girl might spend half the time allowed for the whole paper in drawing this outline map of Europe, and yet probably not more than one-eighth or one-tenth of the total marks would be awarded as the maximum for it.

Let me read you a History paper, set at this same examination, for the junior candidates. The time allowed for the paper was one and a-half hours. The period that had been specially prepared was 1483 to 1600:—

"1. Give dates of the deaths of the sovereigns of England from Henry VII. to Charles II.

"2. Determine as nearly as you can the dates of following events, and give names of the persons principally connected with them: Martyrdom of Ridley, Bishop of Worcester; trial and execution of Strafford; Assassination of Buckingham; completion of authorised version of the Bible; Capture of Montrose.

"3. What were the most important events in the reign of Elizabeth?