

have spent two years in *prima*. The examination is of the nature of the work done in *prima*, but is not such as may be prepared for by any amount of cramming beforehand. It is of a character adapted to test the actual knowledge which the candidate possesses of the subjects of the course. Passages hitherto not read in the studies of the class are set in Latin, Greek and French, and an off-hand translation and criticism is demanded. Exercises in German, mathematics, physics, geography and history, are also assigned, and short essays in Latin and German, composed impromptu, are expected of the candidates. A candidate who has shown himself qualified to pass is awarded a certificate of maturity; he who falls short of the average demanded receives also a certificate, but one which testifies to his immaturity or unfitness for University studies. He may indeed proceed to the University, and be admitted, but only as an irregular student, the time which he spends at the University previous to obtaining his maturity-certificate not being reckoned to him.

The certificate, signed by the individual members of the Examining Commission, is awarded with much ceremony at a public meeting held in the large *Aula* of the Gymnasium, at the close of the semester. This is a grand occasion in the history of the Gymnasium, and is rendered especially momentous to the pupils by the important issues which are at stake for the graduating class. In presence of a large number of school dignitaries a learned essay is read by the rector, or one of the professors in *prima*. This is followed by speeches and a public announcement of the results of the examination and a distribution of the certificates. Any one who has been so unfortunate as not to obtain the *Geugniss der Reife*, i. e., Certificate of Qualification for the Studies of the University, is advanced according to the character of his previous career, either to continue in attendance at the Gymnasium for another period of six months, and then make a fresh attempt to pass, or to abandon altogether his intention of proceeding to the University.

Much the same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the final examinations at the *Realschule*. The leaving certificate here obtained is of less value as a pass to higher positions. It admits to certain posts in the public service, and for business positions it is now almost indispensable as a qualification. One of the chief uses of the school certificate, however, is that it entitles the holder to shorter military service. The ordinary German peasant, and all who have not taken advantage of a full Gymnasium or Real school course, are obliged to devote three entire years to military service. Young men, however, holding a *certificate of maturity*, and volunteering besides to provide themselves with arms and regimentals, are admitted to the single-year service, besides enjoying certain other considerations as to time and place of service not usually granted to those discharging their military obligations.

It is found in practice the number of boys completing the Gymnasium is much larger than that of those who go through the entire course of the Real school. The great mass of those who go into commercial or industrial pursuits leave the Real school in *secunda* or even in *tertia*, certificates being granted also at those stages of advancement—which are accepted for business positions. Those who complete the course have generally in view in so doing the application for a post in the public service.

#### CURRENT MISTAKES IN TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR

BY C. P. MASON, ESQ., B.A., F.C.P., AUTHOR OF "MASON'S ENGLISH GRAMMAR," &c.

(Continued.)

Let me, in passing, call attention to another exceedingly common mistake. Learners are often incautiously told that a transi-

sitive verb must always have an object,—the very important condition of its being in the active voice being lost sight of. Of course, a transitive verb may be in the passive voice, and then there is no grammatical object of the verb, though of course the subject stands for the real object of the action. When I have given a list of verbs to be classed as transitive and intransitive respectively, I have usually found three candidates out of four put all passives among the intransitives. In the last list that I gave, there happened to be only one transitive verb (*lay*) in the active voice. A candidate pounced upon this, and informed me that *lay* was the only transitive verb in the list, "because you can lay an egg."

I must give you one other illustration of the all-pervading confusion between words and things, which I have been trying to expose. In parsing the words, "full many a flower is born to blush unseen," a candidate recently wrote, "is a preposition, showing the relation between *flower* and *born*." Could anything be more preposterously wrong? Hold, however; perhaps he was only making a strictly logical application of the definition that he had learnt. Very likely he had used one of our commonest school grammars, which says that "a preposition is a word which shows the relation of a noun or pronoun to some other word in the sentence." Well, does not *is* show (in a sort of way) the relation of *flower* to *born*? Then, according to the definition, it is a preposition. If not, why not? Why, because the ordinary definitions of a preposition are totally wrong. Everybody admits that prepositions show relations of some kind. Of what kind? Here, again, there is absolutely no dispute. Primarily, relations in space, rest in, motion to, motion from—in, at, to, towards, from, &c. Secondly, relations of time—at, before, after, &c. Thirdly, by a metaphorical use, the relations of cause, effect, &c. Now, I put it to any one's common sense, do these relations subsist between the words of a sentence? If I talk of a bird in a cage, is the word *bird* inside the word *cage*? Of course not. The preposition *in* shows the relation in space of one thing to another. Can any one point out any conceivable relation between the word *bird* and the word *cage*, which is expressed by *in*? Yet a grammar, which bears a very distinguished name on the title-page, lays down broadly that "a preposition is a word which shows the relation of one noun to another." But these writers cannot even be consistent with themselves. In the same book we read, a few lines further on, that, "when a preposition connects noun with noun, the relation is between one object and another." Both statements cannot be correct. Still, when a man has made a blunder, it is better to correct it than to stick to it; and nothing could be more accurate than the statement just quoted, and what the writer goes on to say, "when it (i. e., the preposition) connects a noun with an adjective, the relation is between an object and the quality expressed by the adjective (as *red* with *weeping*); when it connects a noun with a verb, the relation is between an object and an action (as *broken* with *storms*)." But a paragraph like this is a veritable *rara avis* in those sections of English grammars which treat of prepositions. The definition which is given by three examiners out of four is the thoroughly erroneous one that I quoted before, namely, that "the preposition is a word which shows the relation of a noun or pronoun to some other word in the sentence," to which the writer adds a paragraph which for confusion of thought is perhaps unrivalled. He says, "Sometimes the preposition shows the relation of one substantive to another, as, 'the wisdom of Solomon is renowned'; sometimes it shows the relation of some person or thing to a given action, as 'he fell against the wall'; sometimes it shows the relation of a substantive to some quality, as 'bread is good for food.' The facts may be thus expressed: 'prepositions relate nouns or pronouns to other nouns or pronouns, to verbs, or