

gives them an unreality which children are the first to detect, and which causes them to feel a distrust at the docile little interlocutors in such books as the "Evenings at Home," or "Sandford and Merton."

We have now to consider the use of written examinations. What is it that a judicious written examination does for a pupil? Of course it tests his knowledge. But it is also a valuable educational instrument. It teaches method, promptitude, self-reliance. It demands accuracy and fulness of memory, concentrated attention, and the power to shape and arrange our thoughts. "Moreover," as Mr. Latham well observes, "behind all these qualities lies energy of mind. Of this, so far as it is brought out in dealing with books or ideas, we can judge fairly from a written examination. We see that knowledge has been got, and know that brain work has been given to get it, and we can find out pretty well from a set of papers whether a man knows his own mind or not." The oral examination is good for intellectual stimulus, for bracing up the student to rapid and prompt action; for deftness and brightness. But oral answers are necessarily discontinuous and fragmentary. The pupil receives help at every moment from the teacher's face, and from the answers of his fellows. Until you subject him to a written test, you have no security that he has grasped the subject as a whole, or that he is master of the links that bind one part of the subject to another. Nevertheless there are certain valuable qualities which are not revealed by written examinations, and which the habit of relying on them does not encourage. They do little to test moral qualities or active power. They do not indicate whether the action of the mind is rapid or sluggish, or whether the work is done from a sense of duty or strong interest in it. They

do not help you to gauge those attributes on which success and honour in life so much depend—sympathy, reverence, co-operation, address, flexibility, manner. Let us once for all acknowledge that the best examinations do not test the whole man, but leave some important elements of character to be ascertained by other means; and then proceed to inquire within what limits they are valuable, and how we can get the maximum of good out of them. If they fail it is not because they are in themselves misleading, but because too much is expected of them, to the exclusion of other means of judging.

In dealing with this subject we must beware of being misled by false metaphors. We are sometimes told that the habit of probing children often, either by written or oral examinations, is like digging up a flower to see how it grows; and those who talk thus say much as to the value of stillness and meditation, and the importance of silent growth, and the natural action of the child's own mental powers. But the act of reproducing what we know, is not an act of loosening but of fixing. There would be stagnation and forgetfulness if the child remained unquestioned and untested.

There is another misleading metaphor used in connection with the subject of examinations. They are said to encourage *cram*. If by this term we mean dishonest preparation, hasty and crude study, a contrivance to get credit for more than one really understands, we are all alike interested in denouncing it. But really good examinations are meant to detect not to encourage it. And every good examiner who knows his business can easily discover the difference between knowledge well digested, and that which is superficial and is specially got up to deceive. This ugly term can at least not be applied to reading, writing and arithmetic. A child can