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THE HUMOURS OF EXAMINATIONS.

AS a rule, examinations are not regarded by the outside world as occasions on which a display of humour may be expected. But if exceptions prove the rule, then may examinations claim to afford a very rich fund of ludicrous incidents. There are naturally varied circumstances in examinations which call forth the wit of the candidate. The humour varies, in fact, with the particular person who is being examined, and what is the topic of conversation between examiner and candidate. There is to be distinguished a medical as well as a legal humour; and conspicuous amongst the occasions which afford opportunity for the display of the ludicrous, are those examinations which, dignified by the name of "general knowledge" trials, afford a very wide and rich field for the ingenuity of candidates.

A thought may suggest itself to readers who reflect upon the subject of examination humour, that of all circumstances, the position of a candidate at an examination table is the

least likely situation to evoke a sense of the humorous. The racking of the brain to find an answer to an oral question, the knowledge that the examiner is waiting with a fixity of gaze for one's reply, and the desperation with which at last the candidate may rise to the occasion, form a series of circumstances, out of which a joke might be regarded as least likely to arise. But it is this very desperation which is frequently the natural parent of the witticism. The candidate makes up his mind to say or write something, and that something, as often as not, is, in an innocent moment of inspiration, a joke.

One of the frequent causes of humour at examinations is of course the ignorance of candidates. A person was once asked to answer the question, "Who was Esau?" His reply was highly characteristic. "Esau," said he, "was a man who wrote fables, and who sold the copyright to a publisher for a bottle of potash!" The confusion of "Esau" and "Æsop," of "copyright" and