

and to ask questions which throw all study into confusion, give a factitious value to trifles, and thus injure the student's power of selecting what is really important. But, in examinations on language, not even this miserable defence can be set up for asking about mere eccentricities. These things are often better known to school children than to scholars who can use the language. As I have said, a piece of knowledge considered essential for schoolboys, viz., the knowledge of the gender of *teges*, would not be acquired in reading through the whole of the Latin classics. Of course I admit that "*exceptio probat regulam*"—not indeed in the ridiculous meaning, or no-meaning, sometimes attached to those words by people who are foolish enough to suppose that a rule is established by the production of instances in which it does not hold; but *exceptio probat regulam* is true in this sense, that by the statement of an exception as such we show the rule. If we say, "There were 10 sheep in the field, and one of them was black," this saves us the trouble of asserting fully that nine of them were white, and one black. Thus the mention of the exception shows the rule. In the same way the learning of exceptions as such is often a good way of learning a rule, and it is probably easier to remember that *arbor* is the only feminine word ending in *or*, than it would have been to remember that no feminine ended in *or*. I would therefore by no means exclude questions about peculiarities; but they should not be made much of, and they should always be given in such a way as to test the pupil's knowledge of the important thing, viz., the usual. If we set the declining of *domus* in Latin, or of *Hertz* in German, we find whether the pupils have learnt about those special words, but we do not test their knowledge of anything beyond. Failure in this case is of little importance. But if we take words which belong to a large class, say *amicus* or *Freund*, a breakdown here will be a very different matter. Our chief rules should be, as in other subjects—first, to ask about things really important, and next to put the greater part of the questions in such a form that the ordinary candidate may be likely to answer them. If the examination be a pass examination, all the questions should be of this kind; but where the relative position of the pupils must be determined, some more difficult questions may be necessary. The easiest questions, however, will often scatter the pupils more than the inexperienced would believe.

In arranging beforehand for good grammatical questions, we should make a collection of typical questions. These typical questions should refer mainly to classes of words, and only to such special words as are essential, e. g., the pronouns and the auxiliary verbs. Our questions must always test the foundations as well as the superstructure, or we shall find that pupils who have been two or three years at a language, make blunders which would have been almost impossible at the end of the first six months.

Let us now consider another heading under which we should prepare for the examination. I very often take up examination papers on foreign books, and see nothing but two or three long pieces set for translation, and a few questions which these pieces suggest. If these are good papers, there can be no such thing as an art of examining, and you and I this evening are looking for a mare's nest. But these papers are sometimes set in a hurry by examiners who know the language in which the book is written, but do not know the book itself. No doubt a good long piece should be set to test the pupils' style as well as accuracy of translation: but in many cases, when the subject has been thoroughly prepared, the pupils will lean almost entirely on their memory for these translations. Mr. Bourne, of Bedford, has lately

pointed out with great force that the translations in the Oxford and Cambridge Locals are very much over-prepared, and that pupils are kept for a whole year reading and re-reading a few pages, till they can go on with the English without getting more than a star from the original. Similarly in the elementary schools, children can sometimes "read" with the books shut quite as well as with them open. The remedy proposed by Mr. Bourne, is this, that the subject should not be announced till six months before the examination. I would suggest another possible remedy, which may be applied more generally. Do not set the piece exactly as it is in the author. The pupils should be warned that variations may have been introduced, or, at least, some words or clauses omitted, so that they will fail if they merely translate from memory. Besides the piece taken with slight alteration from the author, I would also set a piece of condensed narrative written by the examiner nearly in the author's words, and containing only such words and idioms as the author's narrative supplies. This will be far easier than "unseen" passages, but it will be a test of the kind of construing to which the pupils are accustomed, and will give better play to their knowledge and intelligence than the piece which they have construed, or heard construed, many times before. Besides, a piece of this kind can be made to embrace words and idioms and illusions which lie far apart in the original. Such a piece, too, can be made very easy indeed at the beginning, and more difficult as it goes on.

We will now consider the tests of knowledge of special words and idioms in the book. The teacher, as I said, should mark his own book, and in the case of peculiar words and all but the most common idioms he should put cross references in his margin, and should make his pupils do the same. In marking words and idioms for special attention, we must be guided partly by the nature of the language, partly by the stage of learning at which our pupils have arrived. The area of possible knowledge in studying a few pages is really of vast extent; we should therefore determine beforehand which points are to be especially attended to; and our marked book, and our collection of questions for examination, will be our safeguard against the besetting sin of all teachers interested in their work—the sin of desultoriness, of dwelling on one thing to-day, another thing to-morrow, and supposing that they instructed, *i. e.*, built up, when they have merely heaped together a quantity of heterogeneous material, which has no power of adhesion, and is, in fact, scattered to the four winds nearly as fast as it is collected. For idioms, I think a number of short sentences should be selected and set for translation and explanation. Suitable sentences must be noted as they occur in our study of the author.

For words, some of those that have been marked may be given either for the meaning out of the context (and, for the study of the language, it is very important to know a word out of the context as well as in), or for analysis, or for the peculiarities of a class to which they belong. But, in thus attending to the language, we shall run a risk of missing altogether the meaning of our author. I was myself a long time in discovering this. I seem to have been especially struck with it when I had been teaching many years. May I read you a note I took after an examination in Cæsar? These notes, taken at the same time, express one's notions with a freshness which is afterwards unattainable:—"Unless I am very much pressed," says my note-book, "I always enjoy looking over examination papers, at least when I have set the paper, and boys whom I have taught have been examined. One gets an insight into boys' minds which seems a revelation. Often we find that what we