

tion of Mr. Henry Latham's book on Examinations. I wish other examiners would work in his spirit, and tell us about aims and methods of examining as he has done. His work so interested me, that I thought the subject of it, even when treated in a very inferior manner, might interest you; but one's time both in preparing and giving a lecture, is necessarily very limited, and I must this evening confine myself to a few hints which suggest themselves to me from my own experience. If I am to say anything useful. I must talk about what I am practically familiar with. Now I have for many years been teaching and examining boys below 16. Beyond that age I have had a little to do with them, so I wish you to consider my remarks as referring to the examining of young boys or girls only.

I said just now that I should like to get behind the examiner. This is sometimes impossible, but there is one examiner we may know a good deal about if we will take the trouble, viz., ourselves. Every teacher spends a great deal of his time in examining; and, in fact, his skill in teaching depends to some extent, to a large extent indeed, on his skill examining. Our subject to-night does not include *vicâ voce* questioning, but only examination papers; and these are set, or should be set, from time to time by the person who gives the instruction. At the end of every stage in the journey—before the holidays mostly—there is an examination by writing. In some schools the masters examine each other's forms; in some cases, an external authority is called in; and occasionally; though very seldom I should hope, the labour is divided,—the instructor does not to set the papers, but only marks the answers. I do not think I ever heard of the teacher setting the questions and some one else marking the answers. It is thought, I suppose, that in this case the master would set only those things which he knew the boys to be familiar with. But I am inclined to maintain that, if the questions are set by one man, and the answers looked over by another, the teacher should set the questions. Whatever the subject, the area of possible knowledge is always too great for the young to be familiar with every part of it, and nothing is more vexatious and discouraging, both to teacher and taught, than for some one who knows nothing of the teaching given, to come and propound a set of questions which lie just outside those portions of the subject that have been specially dwelt upon. There is, I admit, a grave objection to one man's asking the questions, and another looking at the answers. No one takes proper interest in the answers except the proposer of the question; and yet it seems to me so important that the questions should follow the teaching, that, in all cases where the examiner is not the teacher, I would have him procure from the teacher a set of questions, and choose from them about as many questions as he sets out of his own head. In this way he will get some notion beforehand of the main lines of the teaching, and if he finds a very strongly marked difference between the answers to the teacher's questions and the answers to easy questions of his own, he will be able to pronounce that the teacher has worked too much in a groove.

But whether, the final examination is in his hands or not, the teacher should from time to time give his pupils a paper on the subject they are studying. But papers must be set, and for the most part looked over, out of school; and here comes in the obstacle of laziness, (or, to use the objective rather than the subjective name, want of time,) which teachers, as far as I have observed, are not more exempt from than others mortals. The day for the paper is fixed long beforehand, but the teacher persuades himself he can go to work and set it at some

odd time before it is wanted. So he puts off till he can put off no longer, and then he sits down and dashes off a paper, asking just what comes into his head at the moment. I think I have got behind the examiner here. Certainly I must plead guilty to having often and often under-estimated the time it would take me to set a paper so that I have had great difficulty in finishing it, and then have left in my hurry some portions of the subject which my pupils certainly ought to have been examined in. The best way to avoid the danger is, I believe, to prepare material for the paper although one's teaching. To do this properly, we must have made up our minds what sort of questions we are going to ask; we must have arranged our different types of questions, and we can then collect good questions under the various headings. I shall perhaps explain my meaning best by taking a particular subject. Suppose we are reading a foreign book with our pupils. We have several objects before us. First, we wish to exercise our pupils' intelligence; secondly, we want to confirm and advance their knowledge of the grammatical construction of the foreign language; thirdly, we wish to fix in their minds all the important words or idioms that occur in our author; fourthly we must see that they enter into the meaning of the book they are reading, and can give a clear account of every passage, even of passages difficult in expression or allusion.

This is by no means an exhaustive account, but some such scheme of objects we should always settle beforehand. Our examination paper is to test, as far as may be, our success in each of these particulars. The intelligence of our pupils will be tested by questions of very different kinds; though how far we have contributed to its development, must always remain undecided. Questions will occur to us from time to time which cannot be answered by mere memory, and such questions we should carefully treasure up till they are wanted. Other questions will occur to us in great numbers, and well should enter them in a note-book under various heads, either when we are preparing to give a lesson, or, perhaps better still, when we have given it. I may say in passing, that if the teacher mark his own book, this will often save his time in thinking of *viva voce* questions, and will also enable him to ask the same question again and again—a most important point in teaching. But it would be unwise to mark in a book which must be left about, the pieces especially good for setting in the examination; and besides, our questions had better be registered under their proper categories. How should we test our pupil's knowledge of the grammatical structure of the foreign language? Not, most assuredly, by asking, as examiners are too prone to ask, about some anomalous words which are seldom seen except in grammars or examination papers—the use of the regular plural of the French word *œil*, e. g., or the gender of *teges* in Latin, a word which some old grammarian has done a disservice to the human race by mentioning as a feminine, though it does not occur with an adjective in any extant author. The tendency to ask what nobody should try to remember,—to ask, e. g.,

“How many notes a sackbut has,
And whether shawms have strings,”—

is the besetting sin of examiners. In history, geography, and kindred subjects, a defence of this practice has been attempted. If, it has been argued, the examinee knows unimportant things, he must *a fortiori* know the important. But, allowing this to be true, the practice is still utterly unjustifiable. We want to encourage intelligent study, and the examiner has no right to ignore results,