

We often find that when teachers fancy their pupils have obtained a thorough mastery of a subject, they are deceived because they have not noticed that, in almost imperceptible ways, they have been doing for the pupil what he ought to be doing for himself. I have repeatedly gone into a school, and on examining it, say in arithmetic, have been told by the master, "It is very strange that the boys do not know it; I thought they knew it thoroughly." I have always asked them this, "When you have examined them, have you made them answer for themselves?" And the reply has been, "Yes; I have left them with themselves except just the very slightest possible help occasionally; just enough to prevent them from wandering about." That is the whole thing. That very little help is the thing which vitiated the examination altogether; and the test of real mastery is that the knowledge shall be produced without any help at all. When a man or woman in after-life come to use their knowledge, they will find that the knowledge is really of no use unless they are able to apply it absolutely without assistance, and without the slightest guidance to prevent them falling into the most grievous mistakes. For this reason these examinations should be used to guard us against this sort of mistake. I have said these words rather for the sake of the scholars than the teachers, because teachers are almost driven to find it out for themselves. I know, however, it is not by any means familiar to the learner, and I want, if I can, to get them to see the absolute necessity of using these examinations for the purpose to which I have been speaking, to test what they can do absolutely unaided. But now I wish to add, what is perhaps still more important to all, as to the danger which always attends such examinations. There is a perpetual danger that they shall crush the study as it were into a mould; that they learner should learn, not with a view to knowledge, but with a view to being examined; that instead of the knowledge growing in the mind in the healthy and natural way, developing, as it were, from within, that the learner should be always looking forward to the black day when perhaps he may fail in his examination; that he shall always be asking himself, What sort of questions shall I be asked? and that he shall be endeavouring, if possible, to fit every thing that he learns to what he anticipates will be in the paper that is put before him. In the same way there is a danger that the teacher, instead of studying the subject, shall study the examination papers; that these papers for one year shall be the guide for the teaching of the next, and that the teacher shall have constantly present to his mind the probability or improbability of particular questions being asked. In all these cases it is quite certain that examinations damage teaching. Learning, if it is to be worth anything, must have a spontaneous character, and must have a growth within the mind peculiar and proper to itself. It must be adapted to the mind of the learner. And, moreover, the teacher must adapt as he gives it to his own mode of teaching, and all this is liable to be set aside by the thought of the examination for which the teacher and learner are to prepare. Moreover, these examinations are intended to secure that there shall be such an absolute mastery of the knowledge as will be required in after life to be applied to practical purposes, and in all examinations there is an almost inevitable tendency not to make the examination at all like the sort of trial that will be found in life afterwards. Both in the examiner and in the examinee there is a natural tendency to have the answers neat, clear, and precise, and to frame the questions accordingly. But when the learner goes out into the world, he will never by any chance get precisely such questions as these to which to apply his knowledge. Thus, for instance, if he has

studied physics or mechanics, and has answered a great many examination questions, all this will have been framed with a view to neat and precise answers; but when he comes into actual life, he will find the presence of that awkward element, friction, which disturbs all calculations, and will never allow anything to come out neat and accurate at all. So, again, to take a different illustration. A learner has studied chemistry, and in doing so he has been dealing always in the laboratory with carefully prepared ingredients, as pure as they can be obtained; and this is the proper way, for you cannot study well unless you make your study as simple as you can. But when you go out into life, and have to apply that chemical knowledge, you never get the ingredients precisely such as you find them in the laboratory, but all sorts of foreign elements come in and disturb your calculations. So, again, to take an illustration from a different source. A learner has learned, with great pains, to write themes and essays, taking great care in the composition and arrangement of his sentences, and this is an admirable preparation for a great deal that he will afterwards have to do; but nevertheless, in after life he will inevitably find that he is often called upon to use this power under circumstances where he is no longer able to sit down and frame his sentences just as he would wish; perhaps he may be called upon to speak without any previous preparation; or to write without any time for thinking, or even, perhaps, without those means of information which he has been accustomed to use. Thus in many ways a man finds that there are difficulties in applying that knowledge which he carefully acquired in the process of education. For this reason it is that all through the process of acquiring knowledge it is essential that the mind should be fresh and vigorous, and maintain its own spontaneity; and in proportion as it loses that spontaneity, and gets to work by rule and according to routine, in that proportion will it be found that the knowledge acquired is not suited for the purposes of after-life. Hence, therefore, the danger that these examinations may have the effect of making knowledge more precise and more reducible, but less living; with less of the man's mind in it, and consequently with much less elasticity, and much less adaptability to the purposes for which it will afterwards be wanted. There is one rule which it has always appeared to me should be followed in these matters, viz., to make the examination follow the school, rather than making the school follow the examination. We should, as far as possible, endeavour that the school should share in as free a course and as unfettered a choice as possible. Instead of putting before them a rigid course of examination, and saying, 'Mould your teaching to that,' we should rather say, 'Let us know how you teach, and we will endeavour to accommodate our examinations to that.' And it is because I believe the College of Preceptors has endeavoured to follow this principle that its work has been so good. Nevertheless, what I have said may not be altogether out of place, because even if this principle be adopted, it is as well that it should be consciously expressed and held out as the end at which the College is aiming. It is as well, in a matter of this sort, that we should all know what we are doing, and see clearly the reasons for it. Although I may claim to have some knowledge of the matter, from long experience and the devotion of a life, I have no doubt there are many listening to me who are much better able than I am to say all this; but still I do not think it is at all unfitting that on such an occasion I should say it. I rejoice, therefore, to see the work that the College of Preceptors is doing. I rejoice to observe, from the Report your Dean has sent to me, that the number of candidates has steadily increased from 1517 in 1870 to 2313 in 1873—an increase of over 50 per cent. And not