

are in reality merely sceptical, appears from this, that they admit of no answer, and produce no conviction." But if they can produce no conviction, why try to disturb the settled belief of the world.

My belief may indeed, be an old-world belief, but if sound, it is, like old wine, all the better for being old. Was it not the belief of Christ and of Paul, of Copernicus and Kepler, of Bacon and Galileo, and Newton and Laplace, of Buffon and Cuvier, and lastly of Darwin, and and is it not the faith of Herbert Spencer and of the whole sane and sober world, as well as that of every fish, and bird, and beast, yea, of every mosquito that lights on our ideal philosopher longing to suck his ideal blood. In fine, the old test of reality is the same to-day that it has ever been, "*handle me and see* ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bone as ye *see me HAVE*."

J. ANTISELL ALLEN.

AN IDEAL EXAMINATION.

To the Editor of the Journal.

Is it worth while to ask the question, Can we have an ideal examination paper? Every one will say it is. Then we ask further, What is an ideal paper? This we will try to discover.

In the first place it is surely correct that the length of the paper and the time given to it should bear a proper relation. Some students will have their paper finished before others are half through. There should then be a generous allowance of time to each paper; a man should not suffer because he is slow.

Then, as to the questions themselves. We think there ought, on every paper, to be a certain number of leading questions, requiring direct answers, such as questions of facts, definitions, etc. These questions, all who know anything of the subject, ought to be able to answer almost perfectly. Again, they should bear such a proportion to the whole number, that, though all were answered perfectly, still they would not give a pass.

Then there should be a number of questions of another description. Questions, which require the application of principles, which are beyond the scope of mere cram, which, in fact, go to show that the student is getting the real benefit from education, that he is being mentally trained and is not a mere depository of knowledge.

Finally, there should be a third kind of questions, of such a nature as to give the best men in the class an opportunity of proving which of them really deserved the first place, and of rendering the professor's duty in deciding easier. These last questions will evidently be the most difficult and should constitute the crucial test of ability, ingenuity and mental training.

Then there is the custom of giving a large number of questions and allowing the students to choose a certain number. This has many disadvantages, especially as it is an impossibility to mark absolutely fairly when each one chooses a different combination of questions. We would

submit, then, that the option paper, though it be, to a certain extent, the test of a student's knowledge of a subject, fails when we want to compare one student's work with that of another, to give a proper standing; and on the whole it ought to be rejected. Yet, as some professors make a hobby of it, we would suggest, that the optional questions be only such as come under the second and third classes of our ideal paper. There should be no optionals of the first class. In a promiscuous paper a student will choose at once all those questions that are of the first class, he will never prefer one of the second or third to the first, so he should not have a chance of doing so. Again, some professors, on an optional paper, allow the writers who choose to compete for a position or for honors a chance to do extra questions; in a case of this sort to give all a fair and equal chance the time should practically be unlimited. As papers are now set we sometimes find one in which all the questions are of the first class, and as a consequence two or three students come out equal at the top. This is the sort of paper to encourage cram and cribbing. We also find papers in which no questions of the first class appear, then there is weeping and wailing. Many are plucked who deserve to be, but many also who do not deserve to be thus used suffer as well.

The only way to do justice to all, to do away with cram, to make cribs of no avail, is to set a properly graded paper. These crude ideas we will leave to the thoughtful consideration of our professors, with the hope that they may not be fruitless, and that perchance an ideal examination paper may as the result be approximately obtained.

POLLUX.

ALMA MATER.

A REGULAR meeting of this society was held on the 16th inst. with Pres. Heath in the chair. After the minutes of the last meeting had been read and confirmed, the case of the indebtedness of the Society to Bird, the caterer of the banquet tendered Chancellor Fleming in '82, was discussed at length, and finally it was resolved that the society should pay one-half the account, the Council paying the balance. A request from the gymnasium committee asking the Alma Mater society to donate \$25 was brought forward, but no definite action was taken in the matter. The program for the next evening was then arranged, and after some instrumental solos the meeting adjourned.

The regular meeting of this society was held in the Science class-room on the 23d inst., with the President in the chair. The minutes of the last regular meeting were read, and on motion adopted. Mr. J. Maclellan's motion that \$25 be donated to the gymnasium was fully considered and carried. The President announced that at the next regular meeting of the society he would deliver his annual address.