

eral knowledge, the very fact that he is possessed of these qualities and is anxious to make a good mark, concentrates his attention upon these points. As a natural consequence he is apt to fail on other and perhaps more essential particulars. The weeks prior to an examination in any medical or law school are devoted to the hardest kind of study, and it is so in most of the collegiate departments of the universities.

A written examination with marks is not, in truth, an attempt to ascertain general knowledge, but specific. A student in history, for example, may be well acquainted with the general sequence of events; he may have a fair knowledge of the philosophy of the subject; he may know the date of the founding of Rome, or of the fall of Constantinople; he may have a fair idea of the life of Cæsar and its relations to the Roman Empire, but be quite incapable of giving the exact date of his death, or even particulars of his victories. It is important to know that Cæsar conquered Gaul, but not particularly essential to know when these conquests were made. In an examination calling for minute details—and very many are such—the student may fail, and fail grievously, though his general knowledge be fairly accurate.

While such is the condition of things with the attentive students, a very different state of affairs obtains with the indifferent ones. These latter gentlemen exhibit cramming in its fullest development. The indifferent student undertakes to compress into a few weeks the work of months, and the methods by which he accomplishes this end are both numerous and singular. Not unfrequently he will actually undertake to study and review whole text-books in a week that really require months for a thorough mastering. This is the real cram, the genuine article, the dread of the teacher.

Sometimes a tutor is called in, and the operation conducted under organized direction. More frequently—in the ordinary colleges at all events—the student will make his preparation in a truly wonderful manner. He will take his geometry or his conic sections, for example, and spend an entire night—more if necessary—in copying out all the problems on small rolls of paper. His Cæsar, or his German reader, will be carefully interlined, if not entirely, at least in the most difficult parts. Other text-books, which do not permit of either of these modes of treatment, have their covers removed, the superfluous sheets thrown out, the margins cut down, and the whole reduced to a convenient size for an inner pocket. Armed with these weapons, the delinquent boldly faces his examiner if he finds it impossible to hide behind his back, and passes the ordeal as best he may. One other preparation is necessary, and that is to secure a seat near the best man. The absorption of water by the sun on a hot day is not more direct or powerful than the absorption of knowledge that follows this master-move. By a proper and careful use of these means, or as many of them as can be used, the most careless student is enabled to pass a tolerable examination.

So general and thorough is the practice of cheating in very many of our colleges and universities, that any comparison of students by marks is grossly unfair. It is so generally expected that the better students shall help their less industrious companions, that it is almost impossible to reform the system. The result is disastrous in many ways. Knowledge that it has taken one man months to gain, is transferred in five minutes to others who may never have opened a text-book. Opportunities are offered for a duplication of papers, and as all are marked on an arithmetical basis, the