

## ARE ARITHMETIC AND GRAMMAR AS WELL TAUGHT NOW AS FORMERLY?\*

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ARE they *well* taught *now*? Let the awkward composition and "bad Grammar" of the papers of Entrance candidates answer. Let the ill-constructed sentences, and faulty syntax, so often to be seen in the applications for situations, not always confined to those of *Third Class Teachers*, and not always excluding an occasional "gem" penned by a University graduate, also make reply. Consult the Examiners of Primary and Junior Leaving Candidates' answer papers, and listen to the admonition given Normal School Examiners not to "pass candidates who show themselves deficient in scholarship." Ask Inspectors what kind of teaching they too often see at their official visits, and enquire of them what story the hundreds of letters they receive tell on this point.

But why select these two branches? Because they constitute the backbone of the Public School course—the subjects most important, whether considered as a basis of mental training or the source of instruction for future use, and a weakness in teaching these involves failure in school work.

Twenty years ago teachers prided themselves upon their knowledge of English Grammar, and their skill in Mathematics, and the measure of their success as teachers was the ability of their older pupils to parse correctly difficult selections, to correct, with reasons, almost any example in false Syntax, and to solve intricate problems in Arithmetic. Whatever may be said of the scholarship of pupils

and teachers in other respects, in *these* branches they were well grounded; within the limits of a narrow course they were well trained.

How is it with the pupils of the Public Schools to-day? Their style of work, as far as neatness and method are concerned, has improved. They have some acquaintance with a larger number of branches, but most of the children have not a real, definite knowledge of any of them. They have a smattering of History and Geography, of Agriculture and Temperance, of Drawing and the Literature of certain lessons, but they are pigmies in arithmetic, and Parsing is a lost art.

How, then, you ask, do so many succeed in passing the Entrance Examinations? They pass on a  $33\frac{1}{3}$  subject percentage, and a 50 per cent. total—a system as destructive of all thoroughness in the important mental-training subjects as can well be conceived of, because it admits of compensation for a low standing in Arithmetic or Grammar, or both, by surplus marks for Reading, Copy-books, Drawing-books, and for the composition of a thirty-line letter that may have been previously drilled upon until it has become a thing of memory.

Is proof of this necessary? Here it is. Summing up the results of the last Entrance Examination at eight centres we find that out of 897 candidates only 336, or about 37 per cent., were successful. Of the whole number 454, or 50 per cent., made less than half in Arithmetic, and 711, or 80 per cent., made less than half in Grammar. These were picked

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