

EXAMINATIONS.

There is no more eminent authority on education than Professor Max Muller, the philologist. For besides having an experience of 35 years at Oxford he is quite familiar with the methods of teaching employed in the Continental schools and universities, being himself a graduate of Leipsic, and coming of what Carlyle called a dominion stock. Muller believes that even in England, with her splendid fountains of learning, there is a tendency towards a dead level of uniformity and shallowness, the existence of which he attributes to the examinations system. He contends that examinations are, in effect, lotteries. The examiner may discover what a candidate does not know, but he seldom finds out all he knows; and even if he succeeds in ascertaining all the lad knows, he can never find out how he knows it. The system is productive of a species of downright dishonesty in pupils as well as in teachers. Thus Muller tells of a candidate, who after giving most glibly the dates and the titles of the principal works of Cobbet, Gibbon, Burke, Adam Smith, and David Hume, was asked whether he had ever seen or read any of their writings, and was compelled to answer, No. "There are two kinds of knowledge," says this illustrious veteran, "the one that enters our very blood, the other which we carry about in our pockets." The scholar who is crammed for an examination has an abundance of the pocket learning, but it is a poor commodity, and never remains long in its owner's possession. "The striving after omniscience is the bane of the modern school in England; and we may add that in Canada it is the curse. Muller says his experience as an examiner and as one who has been examined has taught him two things:—(1) All examinations are a means to ascertain how pupils have been taught; they ought never to be allowed to become the end for which pupils are taught; (2) Teaching with a view to examinations lowers the teacher in the eyes of his pupils; learning with a view to examinations is apt to produce confusion, ignorance, and a pretentiousness in itself dishonest. In this country, unfortunately, the principal aim of the system is to propagate the very evils which Muller is warning England against. With us the examination is the be-all and end-all of school life. Text-books, endowed with the imprimatur of the Department before they have been written, are compiled by favorites of the Minister by no means conspicuous either for learning or for ability to teach. A multitude of these are put in the hands of the pupil, and changed from time to time as the whims of the Minister or his political exigencies may dictate.

Muller says that modern education even in its simplest form is neither more nor less than placing, in a systematized form, on the shoulders of every generation the ever-increasing mass of knowledge, experience, custom and tradition that has been accumulated by former generations; hence the necessity for avoiding complicated methods and overlooked curricula. He would not dispense with examinations, but he would have England adopt the Continental system, in which not the mere result of the examination, but the report of the teachers on the pupil's work during the term carries the day. "I know," he adds, "that I shall be told that it would be impossible to trust the masters, and to be guided by their opinion, because they are interested parties. Now, first of all, there are far more honest men in the world than dishonest, and it does not answer to legislate as if all school masters were rogues. It is enough they should know that their reports would be scrutinized (by competent Government inspectors) to keep even the most reprobate of teachers from bearing false witness in favor of their pupils." Muller's complaint against the English system is a complete impeachment of ours; but with us reform is out of the question so long as the Department remains a political machine. —*Mail*.

Practical Department.

SCHOOL WORK.

The following is a specimen of the work done by a pupil in a class of 25, which Reporter heard recite in the fourth grade of Big Rapids' schools. All the pupils did similar work, and when called upon to explain the example, gave substantially the following:

"Multiply 89246 by 129. For convenience the multiplier is written under the multiplicand, units under units, tens under tens, hundreds under hundreds, etc. Beginning at the right, multiply each figure of the multiplicand by each significant figure of the multiplier successively, beginning with units. Thus 9 units times 89,246 equals 803,214 units. Thus 2 tens times 89,246 equals 178,492 tens, or 1,784,920 units. Thus 1 hundred times 89,246 equals 89,246 hundreds, or 8,924,600 tens, or 8,924,600 units. Adding the partial products the true product is 11,512,739.

ARTHUR BAKER.

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[NOTE.—The above was written by this pupil at request of Reporter, and furnished immediately after the recitation. No correction or amendments have been made by the printer.]—*The Moderator*.

Mr. Alexander J. Ellis writes as follows to the *Academy* on "prim'er" or "pri'mer." To my *Speech in Song*, forming one of Messrs. Novello's "Music Primer," the circumstance of having heard several of their writers call them "Pri'mers," induced me to prefix a note: "Pronounce the word *Primer* to rhyme with *simmer*, and not with *rhym'er*. It is an old English word, *liber primerarius*, and is not formed from the word *to prime*." As an A B C book, originally containing short prayers for teaching to read, the pronunciation *prim'er* is given by Walker, Smart, Ogilvie (Cull), Hyde, Clarke, Webster, Worcester, Soule, and Wheeler, although in another sense, some dictionaries also *pri'mer*. Only Chambers gives both *prim'er* and *pri'mer* for the A B C book. For a type all printers say *long prim'er*, though I do not find this in dictionaries. A gentleman who said *pri'mer* wrote to me about the word lately, and said he had consulted a "Cambridge M.A.," on the subject, who asked "What else could *pri'mus* give but *pri'mer*?" They do not teach English pronunciation at Cambridge, and so there is some excuse for this M.A. not knowing the usual pronunciation, of *prim'*, *prim'rose*, and *prim'itive*. Perhaps he said *crime* and *criminal*, *equity* and *iniquity*, just as I was once approached for not saying *inim'icil* in an *am'icable* conversation. The change of pronunciation of words having *i*, when derived from both Latin and Anglo-Saxon, from the Italian long *i* sound to the present English diphthongal sound, took place during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in England, and at the same time for indigenous words in Germany and Holland. It has never taken place in Scandinavia, Italy, Spain, or France. See my *Early English Pronunciation* (part 1, pp. 270-97), for most of the history of the change; the end of it will be given in my *Existing Phonology of the English Dialects*, on which I am now at work, where the missing links of the change are shown to be still in existence. But, whenever Latin *i* or Anglo-Saxon *i* is shortened in pronunciation the old sound is retained. Compare *child*, *children* to *wind* a *windlass*, *will*, *wilderness*, *kinder* to *kinder*, *kind*, *kindered*, (in all of which the *i* is a modernism), and in names *Wid-*, *Wich-*, *Whit-*, *Swin-*, *Wig-* where the *i* was originally a long vowel). As for our English pronunciation of Latin itself in this respect it is purely frightful in its inconsistency. We say *Sic vīs nōn rōdis*, marking three perfectly unnecessary false quantities, and most English Latinists would make two more in continuing the line as *indificōtis āres*. The late Prof. Hewitt Key in-