

Mr. Huxley said, that "to expect students to pass an examination on the subjects in which they are now examined, after only four years study, was little short of criminal. He characterized the attempt to "cram the student with all these subjects as utterly preposterous. The amount of work expected is simply gigantic." Mr. Hutchinson said: "The best memories stagger under the present load." That after four years' study a student can be expected to bear his subjects in mind is simply an absurdity.

We earnestly commend to our own medical examiners, the following but too pertinent words of Dr. Tuke, in relation to the indiscretion or ill-judgment of perhaps too many of their number.

"I would hope it is unnecessary to say that the crotchets of individual examiners should not tinge the questions, or rather the judgment formed of the answers. If the questions which are now asked are not too severe when taken alone, they are regarded by many competent judges as frequently too severe when taken in combination with the other subjects examined upon, and they are sometimes calculated to puzzle the student, from the form in which they are worded. Not long ago an examiner at the London University, speaking to another examiner, boasted of the puzzling questions he had been ingenious enough to ask, whereupon the other replied, to my great satisfaction, "you should try and find out *how much* not *how little* the student knows." I should have no fear of the questions being unreasonable, when put by a wise commonsense Professor—like this, whereas some learned men expect a student to reach in a few months the level of their own mature knowledge."

"I would adopt the language of Professor Humphrey, and say, with Democritus, 'we should strive not after fullness of knowledge, but fullness of understanding,' that is, that we should strive for good, clear, solid, intelligent, produceable and available knowledge, of the kind that will be useful in after life, not so much the refinements of chemistry, anatomy and physiology, which stupefy and then pass away like chaff before the wind, but the essential fundamental facts and principles, welded together, and so woven into the student's mind that he can hold them firmly, and wield them effectually; and that he is conscious of them, not as the goods of other men, or as dogmas which he has, because they were imposed upon

him; but as his own possession, of which he appreciates the value, because he knows how to use them."

So much for the views entertained by Professors Huxley and Humphrey, and Doctors Hutchinson and Tuke on the subject of medical examinations, and as at this moment our own examiners, whether those of the medical schools, or of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, may already be preparing for their spring work, and puzzling themselves over the framing of the questions to be submitted by them to students, we would most respectfully, but also most earnestly, entreat of them, to be merciful in their strength, and to endeavour to discover rather how much a student knows, than how much he does not know; but above all that they will avoid the serious error of seizing the occasion for a pedantic exhibition of their own profound erudition, under the illusory expectation that they will thus elevate themselves in the estimation of the truly clever portion of the candidates, or of their own competent fellow examiners. We do not write this without knowing whereof we speak. We have seen, in some of the printed lists of questions of past years, a few such as the London University examiner boasted of having been able to frame; but if the purpose of the framers was to exhibit their own profound knowledge, we must say they signally failed of that achievement; indeed, in not a few instances the impression left on the minds both of the students and the co-examiners was, that these puzzle-framers were as much befogged in their process of elaboration, as their anticipated victims were in their efforts to divine the meaning of their muddled questions. It is our belief that every question put to a student, at whatever period of his curriculum, should, as Professor Humphrey has so well put it, be so constructed as to elicit that "good, clear, solid, intelligent and produceable knowledge, that will be useful in after life," and not to pump up from an over-crammed maw an undigested and indigestible mass of things which have been swallowed within the last few weeks or months and not one in every ten of which may ever after be regarded by the dyspeptic martyrs otherwise than with abhorrence. A rational and fair final examination may be one of the best lectures the student has ever heard; a pedantic puzzling one must ever be looked back to with disgust.