

advantage, with his work always planned in advance, so that they may know they always have a job ahead of them.

Richard M. Van Gaasbeek, in "American Industries."
(Journal of Agric. Victoria, 10th Feb. 1916).

The examination system.

A NEW SPIRIT WANTED.

In the following article contributed to "The Times Educational Supplement" a correspondent discusses the disadvantages from the point of view of testing true culture of holding examinations at the end of every stage of education. Though his remarks are primarily applicable to British conditions they convey some instructive lessons to us in India also.

The increase in the number of post primary schools and the probable raising of the statutory leaving age to 15 make it expedient to consider whether or not a special leaving examination should be instituted for all schools under State control. The Hadow Committee while acknowledging that the majority of their witnesses were opposed to the establishment of a final examination for post primary schools, yet said in their report that they were of opinion that it would be desirable to make available a special examination of a type suitable for pupils leaving such schools.

Here at the outset we have a difference of opinion among experts on the subject in hand. The two main reasons given by those in favour of leaving examinations are :—

(a) That they set up standards for pupils and teachers alike, and since they mark the end of a course of study pupils are more likely to remain at school until the course is completed than they would be were the completion not marked in an obvious way.

(b) The certificates awarded are of value both to those who go on to further education at the universities and colleges and to those who seek employment in factories and in offices.

These are the reasons in favour of leaving examinations. Against them are the objections that they "tend to cramp the individuality of the schools, bring about a loss of freshness and elasticity, and tend to overpressure; the value of the work done in the school, moreover, is apt to be estimated by the number of certificates obtained." At first sight this last objection may not appear to be serious, but if the work of a school is so judged there

is a tendency to cramming, pupils choose subjects chiefly because they are "easy" while other subjects in their course not to be taken at the examination are neglected. The whole work of the school, in fact tends to be dominated by the examination. The question becomes, not "How shall we gain a competent knowledge of our subjects of study" but "How shall we persuade the examiners that we have such a knowledge" No young person can serve two masters—study and examinations—and he often learns to hate both.

UNIVERSITY METHODS.

The methods of conducting examinations for schools appear to be based on the practice of the Universities; we have printed papers of questions, special days set apart months previously, time limits for answering papers, the passing of some candidates and the failing of others. Underlying this procedure is the assumption that the methods of testing attainment suitable for adults are also suitable in the case of young people. It is questionable whether this assumption is well grounded.

An examination is supposed to discover chiefly what a candidate has learned, but this it cannot do; it merely discovers whether or not he can answer half a dozen questions thrust before him. A question well answered indicates positive knowledge; a question inadequately answered does not indicate positive ignorance; it may mean lack of time, slowness in forming sentences, a love of scholarly work necessitating deliberation, difficulties of penmanship, physical indisposition, a nervous temperament.

It is an exacting, not to say an unfair, feature of leaving examinations that candidates are required to be able to answer, during a particular week of their school life, 30 or 40 questions in, say, half a dozen different subjects. Even the universities are more lenient, for in many cases the degree examinations may be taken at different times of the course. Our young people may have spent three or five or six years at their school, but because they have not attained the requisite degree of mental retentiveness it follows automatically that they cannot proceed to train for careers in the ministry, in teaching, in medicine, or in law. Does the punishment fit the crime? I had recently the painful experience of seeing students of 17 and 18 in tears on learning that their names did not appear in the list of passes in a leaving examination, and they were students who had worked steadily during their course.

The demand that a pupil shall during a specified week be a kind of encyclopaedia is not the only unfair feature of school-leaving examinations. Other factors which have undue influence on a candidate's chances of passing are skill in literary expression and proficiency in examination tactics. Those who are unable to express themselves clearly on paper are handicapped not only in the essay paper but in almost all the papers. Failure in history or science may be due not to want of knowledge of these subjects but to want of facility in the use of words.

For the average student examination difficulties are increased by extraneous obstacles. For instance, the first question attempted may turn out to be more difficult than it appears and time is lost both through flurry consequent on discovering that say, 15 minutes have gone and nothing of importance has been set down and in deciding whether to proceed with the question in hand or to attempt another. In papers where certain marks are attached to each question a boy will generally attempt those with higher marks partly because he scents a challenge. Another point is that the endeavour of the examiner to defeat the crammer may be successful in defeating both student and crammer. It is possible to word a simple question so as to make it difficult. For instance compare "Is a stone of halfpennies heavier, or lighter than half a stone of pennies" with "Is half a stone of copper heavier or lighter than a stone of copper?"

It may be replied that all this constitutes part of the examination. If that be so the student's course should include lessons and practice in examination tactics. But what of the unfortunate who cannot learn these? And again could not the time devoted to learning such things be spent in worthier ways.

The modern examination tends to become a test comparable with those performed at a physical laboratory. The paper of questions corresponds to the different tests to which the material is subjected, the scale of marks to the reading recorded, and the keeping apart of examiner and examined to the elimination of the personal equation. But human progress cannot be measured with a metre scale.

WHY EXAMINE AT ALL?

Let us be bold and say, "Why examine at all?" The only sound answer to this question is that the results of examination provide, in the case of successful pupils, material for a certificate of attainment which forms a passport to the further education

or to apprenticeship. As the Hadow Report says, "Boys and girls are handicapped, both from the economic and from the educational standpoint, unless they can produce some tangible evidence of their attainments." The contention that a well-devised leaving examination sets up a standard at which to aim, and provides an incentive for pupils to remain at school to the end of the course, is in reality an adverse criticism on the existing ideas regarding school work. A well-devised examination, should provide the aim, the standard, and the incentive.

Are the leaving examinations adequate to the task of helping to find for what career a boy or girl is fitted? Should failure to pass on the English paper mar a youth's chance of becoming an engineer? or failure to pass in Latin prevent a girl taking a university course in science? We do not choose our statesmen, novelists, journalists, cricketers by formal examination. Suppose all our country cricketers were to sit for an examination consisting of two papers, one on the theory and practice and the other a general knowledge paper, how would the results accord with the lists of batting and bowling averages? and what if all who failed to obtain more than 50 per cent of the marks were excluded from county cricket?

AN ALTERNATIVE.

Keeping before us the desire of those leaving school to have a passport to the beginning of the next stage of their career, and also the desire of those under whom they are to be trained for preliminary information about their charges, what ought the education authority and the school to give? To an employer a testimonial or a trustworthy recommendation is as valuable as an ordinary leaving certificate; therefore we infer that the document given to a pupil on leaving school should combine his school record and a testimonial, together with the certificate of results at the leaving examination conducted by an external body. Every pupil should receive this document. It ought to contain no reference to faults, because they may ultimately be overcome, and there out to be no suggestion that its holder has failed. After years of school life to turn away a pupil stamped as a failure is unjust. Has the school given him nothing? He has learnt the R's a little of music, of science, and of art; he has also found what is of perhaps of equal importance, his place among his fellows. Even if all this have been but imperfectly acquired he has not failed. The new leaving certificate should record such positive qualities,

where they exist, as willingness to do honest work, love of fair play, possession of the team-spirit, cheerfulness, conscientiousness, health of body, intelligence of mind, love of games, love of nature. Result in the leaving examination should be indicated by the terms "Excellent" "Very Good" and etc., down to "Fair" and circumstances which militated against progress during the course or at the formal examination—poor health and so on—ought to be stated. Finally, this report ought to enable university and other authorities to see readily whether the standard of attainment is equivalent to a pass in their entrance examinations.

The examination should be spread over the last school year and should be conducted in the spirit of one trying to find in a kindly manner what the candidate really knows of the curriculum. The present system succeeds rather in finding what he does not know. In this way the school would learn to regard the syllabus as of more importance than the examination. The formalities of the Government examination might well be abolished. When written papers are set time limits ought to be exceptional and oral examinations ought to be freely used. In such subjects as history and science questions ought to be framed so that knowledge may be displayed without resort to the writing of essays. Above all, it must be remembered that school studies exist for the children, not children for school studies.—(*"The Hindu" April 18th*)

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, COIMBATORE.

METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS.

April 1928.

Date.	Barometric pressure reduced to 32° F inches.	Wind velocity per hour (Miles.)	Maximum shade tempe- rature.	Minimum shade temperature	Rainfall in inches.
1	28.525	2.1	89.4	72.4	0.09
2	28.513	2.7	88.6	70.2	0.72
3	28.487	2.6	89.9	70.6	0.19
4	28.509	1.7	90.6	73.2	...
5	28.560	2.0	92.5	74.2	...
6	28.549	2.4	93.7	74.0	...
7	28.491	1.5	94.5	72.4	...
8	28.505	2.1	93.9	74.5	...
9	28.509	2.8	94.0	72.7	0.79
10	28.459	1.7	90.0	74.5	...
11	28.461	3.3	91.5	73.0	...
12	28.475	2.8	92.5	74.0	0.31
13	28.434	2.1	91.0	70.0	0.38
14	28.382	1.8	92.0	73.0	...
15	28.440	2.5	94.0	70.5	0.19
16	28.450	3.9	91.2	73.8	...
17	28.468	3.1	94.8	76.1	...
18	28.466	3.2	95.3	74.4	...
19	28.508	3.8	96.3	74.6	...
20	28.504	3.9	95.3	74.4	...
21	28.442	4.0	95.3	74.2	...
22	28.440	3.5	98.7	74.3	0.11
23	28.472	2.1	97.4	74.9	...
24	28.517	2.2	97.8	74.2	...
25	28.500	1.6	98.4	74.7	...
26	28.474	3.0	97.3	73.6	...
27	28.457	2.2	99.5	74.7	...
28	28.486	2.4	97.8	75.4	...
29	28.485	2.2	97.0	74.7	...
30	28.500	2.1	97.0	74.3	...