

## REFLECTIONS OF AN EXAMINER.

It is but seldom that any one has a good word to say for the Calcutta University Examiner, except the examinee who succeeds in falsifying all the predictions of his teachers by passing an examination. The Examiner is popularly supposed to be a kind of ferocious animal who delights in nothing so much as a slaughter of the innocents. His function, according to some of his critics, is to hinder the rise of deserving merit, and to furnish the candidates with ~~with~~ <sup>con</sup>sequent proof of the inscrutability of Fate. Nor is the indictment against him put forward without a basis of solid reason. Students have been known to fail in examinations when even on their own modest computations their answers were of more than first class merit. Others, incredible as it may seem, have searched in vain for their names in the list of passes, though they had actually attempted questions to the value of 90 or 100 per cent. To answer all or nearly all the questions and yet fail! What more proof is needed of the lawless malice of the examiner?

The examiner is however not much disturbed by the invective of his critics. He shelters himself behind his stack of papers, and perhaps comforts himself with the reflection that he is not brought face to face with his victims. Would he be much disturbed if he were? We doubt it. For he is bold enough to declare that the murders with which he is charged are really cases of suicide, and that the real enemy of the student is the student himself or the student's so-called 'friend.' Nor would he on his part be unable to support his declaration with solid reasons.

Let us listen for instance to an examiner appointed to examine the English papers of B.A. candidates in 1904 after a lapse of several years. What does he tell us? He has at least three observations to make. He says, in the first place, that there is a marked deterioration in the general quality of the 'paper submitted' as compared with those of seven or eight years ago: that the papers

of this year are on the whole less well-written, abound to a far greater extent in elementary blunder, and show less grasp of fact than the average paper of seven or eight years ago.

His second observation accounts in part perhaps for this deterioration. He tells us that what struck him as the most remarkable fact about the papers he examined was the almost total absence of any indication that the examinees had studied under the instruction of teachers. Students of different colleges, it would seem, showed but little difference in the stuff of which their answers were composed. It was apparent that they had endeavoured—with differing success—to absorb the matter and even the phraseology of their text-book : it was also apparent that they had studied, and not infrequently memorised, published annotations and criticisms. But it was hardly anywhere apparent that they had received personal instruction from teachers in the class-room. There was no such differentiation between groups of candidates as would naturally be expected between the pupils of different teachers. Our examiner is also, it would appear, a teacher. And he is almost reduced to despair by his inability to find in the answers of his own students any sign that they had ever attended his lectures, for not even the mutilated fragment of an illustration or an exposition afforded him its pathetic consolation.

But he rouses himself to make a third observation. He says that he could not help wondering in the case of many a candidate how he ever managed to pass previous University tests so as to succeed in attaining at least the distinction of being a 'failed B.A.' The papers examined contained not seldom grammatical blunders and other absurdities which would have been culpable in an Entrance candidate, and exhibited inconsequences of thought and an ignorance of facts which would be deemed disgraceful even in a school-boy.

( *To be continued.* )

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