

ABERRATIONS OF A 'FAILED' B.A.

Gentle reader, let me tell you at the very outset, that I am the last person in the world to write anything like an article, particularly for a College magazine. For I have not been able to falsify all the predictions of my teachers by passing the B. A. examination. I have however managed to pass previous tests, and succeeded in attaining at least the distinction of being 'a failed B. A.' Yet you know every dog has his day, and so even a 'failed' B. A. may be pardoned if he ventures to have his say in a matter in which he is deeply interested, namely that of University examinations, for he has, as already stated, had the misfortune to be one of the victims,—and their name is legion—of that dreaded engine of educational persecution and indiscriminate slaughter of innocents at the altar of the university. I deem it my duty therefore to think out, to their logical conclusions, so far as in me lies, questions relating to University examinations which have made, and are still making a great deal of noise in this country and occupying the thoughts of many an educational expert. I often found in my school days teachers coming down upon poor little children whenever they failed to give the right spelling or meaning of an English word, and visiting them with dire punishment—making them kneel down or putting "ass's cap" on their head. But it occurred to me whether the kneeling down or the "ass's cap," ought not rather to have been inflicted on the so-called teachers themselves than the poor little things with their mental faculties hardly developed, learning a foreign language, which seems to me all but unnatural, in that it is called English, but strangely enough 66 p. c. of the vocabulary of which come from languages other than English—Latin, Greek, French, etc.,—without anything like a grammar, and, in short, the most unscientific form of speech extant in the world.

The very same fault may be found with those examiners who 'pluck' their victims and scoff at their mistakes, and even go the length of writing amusing articles about them, forgetting all the while that under present conditions it is only psychological and natural that they should make such mistakes. The English

of us Indian students has often been ridiculed as "Babli English," but let me just put one question to these learned men who scoff at our English:—Can a European Sanskrit or a European Bengali scholar speak and write Sanskrit or Bengali as fluently and correctly as we can English? A learned English lady, a veritable scholar in Bengali, who did into English one of the master-pieces in Bengali literature,—Bankim Babu's "*Bisha Briksha*," translated "গোপাল উড়ের যাত্রা" into "The flying journey of Gopal." Another celebrated European Sanskrit scholar translated Michael Madhusudan Dutt's "একদৃষ্টে চাহে বামা দূর লঙ্কাপানে" "into the lady looked intently towards Lanka to drink it with her eyes." The late lamented professor E. B. Cowell, another great Sanskrit scholar, in his very interesting translation of *Kavikankana Chandi* wholly misunderstood and therefore made curious mistakes in the rendering of several passages:—

For instance:—

1. "এ বিরহ করে যদি স্বামী মরে, কোন্ ঘাটে খাবে পানি?" "If meanwhile of grief he dies, *who is to tend his dying hours, As at the Ghat he languid dies.*"

2. "ছয় বধু যার ঘরে নিঃসরে রাড় (বিধব.)"

"His six *poor childless wives bemoan their fate.*" The examples given above only show too clearly how extremely difficult it is even for great scholars to master thoroughly a foreign tongue. And no critic, however fastidious, would ever think of pointing the finger of ridicule at the authors quoted above.

English boys and girls often make worse mistakes in their own tongue; and we not unfrequently come across, in English papers, third class humorists amusing themselves at the expense of the bad orthography and grammar of their own boys and girls. Is it not therefore something preposterous to expect from Indian boys a sound knowledge of that most anomalous form of speech called English but quite unEnglish in its structure and vocabulary? Latin is always Latin. So with regard to other classical languages. The Sanskrit of a thousand years ago is just the same as the Sanskrit of to-day. In all those classical languages

Grammar plays a most important and prominent part. In them the language follows the grammar. But in English it is quite otherwise. The grammar follows the language. First look at the English of 1000 years ago and compare it with what it is now. And what do you find? The two things are as unlike each other as Sanskrit and Persian. Scholars say that modern English is more unlike Anglo-Saxon than Latin, Greek, or French,—that it is far easier for an Englishman to learn any of these latter than the ancestor of their own mother tongue,—Anglo-Saxon. Our university dons expect Indian students to be masters of this language. And these latter are often condemned for their misspelling and bad grammar. Very well, look at the grammar and spelling of English words in works in the Anglo-Saxon or even as late as the Elizabethan period. No Indian students could give more perverse spellings of words or more grotesque constructions in grammar than those you come across in Caedmon, Spenser, or even Shakspeare, or Ben Jonson. It is most unpsychological, to say the least, to abuse the English of our boys as *Babu English* and to hold them up to ridicule if they fail to answer papers in English set, it seems to me, on principles opposed to all that is rational or psychological. The end of the examiner ought to be to test the candidate's general knowledge and not his knowledges of difficult abstruse, intricate, out of the way points. When, for instance, the B. A. candidate is asked to explain the allusion of Medea, or some other difficult question about Greek or Roman Mythology, a subject, by the bye, which even English students are sadly deficient in, it is only natural that he should give vague, obscure and ridiculous answers. Suppose the tables were for once turned, and the examiner was asked to explain a difficult allusion in Hindu Mythology, such as the story of *Savitri*, *Andhamuni* or the esoteric interpretation of '*Dasamahabidya*,' how would it fare with him? 99 chances against 100 that he would break down as lamentably as, or even more lamentably than, the poor victim whom he slaughters outright without the least compunction, and over whose failure he seems to gloat so much. Let me just give one more example. Un-

If we look through this more significant and general fact for the still deeper fact it grows out of, there arises before us the question—*who examines the examiner?* How happens it that men competent in their special knowledge, but so incompetent in their general judgment, should occupy the place they do? This prevailing faultiness of the examiners shows conclusively that the administration is faulty at its centre. Somewhere or other, the power of ultimate decision is exercised by those who are unfit to exercise it. If the examiners of the examiners were set to fill up an examination paper which had for its subject the right conduct of examinations and the proper qualifications for the examiners, there would come out very unsatisfactory answers—” HERBERT SPENCER.

After all this may I not make bold to declare that the murders with which the examinee is charged are really cases of *br* bad daylight murders and not of suicide, and that the real enemy of the student is not the student himself, but the examiner or the paper-setter as well as the system of education now obtaining in this country. In conclusion I can not refrain from sincerely thanking my examiner for the very genial and at the same time caustic humour of his able article; the sole comfort left to myself and my fellow “failures” is the thought that our answer papers could furnish materials for such interesting literature and such an abundant supply of humour—so delightful indeed that one would rather like to be the object of, rather than feel hurt at it.

B. K. S.

SOLUTION.

TO FIND THE NUMBER OF COMBINATIONS OF n THINGS

(NOT ALL DIFFERENT) TAKEN r AT A TIME.

LET there be pa 's, qb 's, rc 's and the rest different letter.

First the numbers of combinations of $(n-p-q-r)$ different letters taken zero, one, two &c...up to all at a time separately and also find the combinations of p a 's taken zero, one, two.....