

almost certainly be necessary to draft the regulations anew, to satisfy Government conditions hitherto unknown. We suggest therefore that the Senate rest content for the present with having affirmed the principle laid down at its last meeting. That affirmation marks a stage of progress which nothing can undo, and it might be wise to pause—even apart from the considerations herein set forward—in order to watch the results of experiments now being tried and to gather experience on the basis of which regulations may in a short while be satisfactorily drafted. We therefore intend at the next meeting of the Senate to ask for permission to move the following resolution before the discussion of the Rules and Regulations is taken up.—

“That the framing of regulations relating to the Residence of College students be postponed until it has been ascertained whether or not the Government of Bengal will lend financial support to the College-messes, and, if it will, to what extent and under what conditions it will do so; and that the Syndicate be requested to approach the Government of Bengal on the subject.”

G. C. BOSE.

E. M. WHEELER.

*Members of the Senate.*

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We have been favoured with the December issue of the *Central Hindu College Magazine*.

#### ENGLISH AT THE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION—II.

*(Continued from p. 125.)*

We now proceed to deal with the other three methods of teaching a language.

(1) *Study of literature.* The uniform practice of our University in the past with a short departure from it in the seventies of the last century, has been the prescribing

of a text-book in English literature. Latterly this text-book has been considerably reduced in size, extracts of a dry and uninteresting character or of technical nature have been included there-in and, an unduly large proportion of marks has been assigned to the paper on the text-book. The comparative shortness of the text-book (which, to aggravate the evil, they are practically permitted to get up in two years) affords a fatal facility to the candidates to cram up the "keys"; and as there is no provision for testing their general knowledge by setting 'unseen passages,' they contrive to obtain a good pass in the paper on the text-book and eventually in the entire subject, considering that this paper carries *three-fifths* of the total marks in English. The direct effect of the practice is bad enough but its indirect effect is worse still. The quantity of reading from the lowest class to the highest is ridiculously small and no encouragement whatever is given to a wide range of study outside the prescribed text-book. My readers will be astounded to find how small this reading is, from the subjoined chart of the work done by a boy reading in a well-conducted school of Calcutta during seven years of school life :—

	No of pages			
1st year	...	...	...	40
2nd "	...	...	...	23
3rd "	...	...	...	42
4th "	...	...	...	56
5th "	...	...	...	56
6th "	...	...	...	62
7th "	...	...	...	43

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The readers are beautifully adorned with pictures and each reading lesson is followed by questions, dictation exercises and

summaries for which we may deduct 12 pages on an average for each one of the Readers (excluding the spelling book for the first year), that is, 72 pages from 322. This brings the number of pages down to 250. For the next two years the boy will read the Entrance text-book consisting of not more than 128 pages. So the matriculate passes his examination and joins a College after having gone through only 378 pages of English reading in the course of the nine years of his school career! What wonder therefore that our boys are so hopelessly deficient in English?

What then is imperatively needed? Encouragement should from the very beginning be given to wide reading. The student must learn, in the memorable words of Blackie, one of the greatest of language-teachers, 'to live largely in the general element of the language, and minute accuracy in details is not to be sought before a fluent, practical command of the general currency of the language has been obtained. He must devour everything greedily that he can lay his hands upon.' With this end in view, the text-book—which is more a hindrance than help—should be discarded altogether and the principle of setting 'unseen passages', should be fully recognised and acted up to. Even if there is a text-book, the proportion of marks assigned to book-work should be reduced to such an extent that no candidate can have a chance of obtaining a bare pass by cramming up his book-knowledge. The text book—if it is still retained—should be of a larger size, and contain interesting reading lessons (a desideratum for young learners to whom a foreign language should not be made doubly repulsive by the repellent character of the selected pieces). It should also, in our humble opinion, be the production of a single pen, as the placing of too many styles before the young learner for adoption and imitation is likely to bewilder him.

The question of 'text-book' or 'no text-book' has been discussed so often and with so much heat on both sides that it is by no means a grateful task to rake up the topic for further discussion. A singular fallacy prevails in certain quarters that the abolition of a text-book means the disuse of a Reader for purposes of class-teaching and the introduction in its place of the ridiculous practice of picking up idioms and phrases from manuals specially prepared for the purpose. Mr. Fuller in his excellent Note on the University Examinations has said positively the last word on the subject. 'The remedy,' says he, 'so far as Examinations in languages are concerned lies in the wider use of unseen passages, and the practical recognition of the fact that *text-books should be used, not as providing subjects for examination, but as guides to study.*' (The italics are ours). A text-book or text-books should give the teacher as well as the pupil a general idea of the standard required of them and should prove a mechanical aid to teaching, but should by no means tie up the hands of the teacher or act as a check on the pupil in the free range of his reading.

(2) *Grammar*—An elaborate system of grammar characterises the classical languages and it is impossible to obtain a thorough grounding in these highly inflexional languages without a patient study of their grammar. Very different is the case with a language like English; a knowledge of a few very simple rules of grammar suffices for all practical purposes of composition and translation. The scientific principles embodied in modern text-books of English grammar are not at all suited to the capacities of young learners. They can be studied with profit by M. A., and B. A., Honour students. What again is taught under the title of grammar is, properly speaking, the idiom of the English language; and the right method of learning it is not the getting up by heart long lists of idiomatic

phrases but the constant habit of reading the best authors and the practical arts of Composition and Translation. More stress should therefore be laid on Composition and Translation than on the technique of grammar, the proper test of grammatical knowledge being the correctness of the candidate's style. It is a silly practice to ask Entrance candidates to give the plural or the feminine forms of certain words or to ask him to supply the missing letter in a word with a view to test his practical knowledge of spelling.

(3) *Composition*. Letter-writing and essay-writing (a somewhat ambitious term by the way) are usually comprehended under this head. Sentence building, the writing of short, continuous paragraphs into which certain words and phrases are to be introduced, the condensation of a long extract in the form of *precis*, the writing of a story in an artistic form the outlines only having been given, and various other intelligent processes of testing the candidate's power of composition can be devised by an efficient examiner. The letters and essays turned out by the youngsters are often of a mechanical character. Besides the difficulty of writing in a foreign language, these boys with very little experience of life labour under the worse difficulty of finding proper thoughts for the purposes of an essay. It would be a better plan, therefore, to suggest the outlines of an essay to these juvenile writers. Leigh Hunt pathetically speaks in a passage in his Autobiography 'of school boys going about to one another on these occasions (that is, while writing essays) and asking for a thought.' If this is the bitter experience of an English school boy, we can very well imagine how his Indian prototype fares, when in addition to the poverty of thought, he labours under the inconvenience of expressing his ideas readily in a foreign tongue.

L. K. B.