EXAMINATIONS, AND HOW TO PREPARE FOR THEM.

A GIRL'S INFLUENCE.

One ago, in the days of the hallelujah, it was told that girls were sometimes known to have the gift of healing by touch, and you may guess they were then much more in vogue. But the great use among their friends. These days are gone, and that gift is now never heard of, but you, girls, have a power remaining quite as wonderful and every bit as serviceable. And what is that? Spiritual influence, young folk. Indeed, I am not sure how great influence any man may exercise, if you choose, is worth any number of the gifts of that age of sleeping beauties and enchanted castles.

Most of you—there are just a few sleepy heads excepted—are eager for power of some sort. You see that life is too serious an affair to be frittered away in doing nothing; and you don't want to be spiritual but in the long run, as having lived altogether in vain. Sensible girls! There is nothing like leaving one's mark, though it be but a little mark, on the world. Try, then, to have influence, for by it you may multiply ourselves to almost any extent, and have a hand in many another person's schemes and—not in a bad sense—a finger in many another person's pie.

"It is a fine subject," says Mary, "but of no practical account to me, for influence I have none." Don't you remember, Mary, how the men said, as he dipped his beet into the lake, "Thou art lessened by this mouthful"? The worm, no doubt, expressed himself boastfully, but he spoke sound philosophy, for even the least has some power. You have no husband and friends and acquaintances, so you have plenty of influence, and you could hardly be without it even if you went to play the hermit in a wood and live on berries and watercress.

The first field for the exercise of influence is certainly home. Never go out of your way, but start with what lies nearest. There are most difficulties there; for it is much easier, as everyone knows, to appear a model worthy of imitation to people we meet, say, once a week, than to those who see us every hour of the day. But at home you should begin. Be good daughters and loving sisters, and the greater blessing will follow that influence for which you have leisure out of doors. How many a girl can do to make her father's house brighter and happier, and how sweet a transition it will be when she comes to supply sunshine to a home of her own! "You had never been among me," said a poet, when on his death-bed, to his wife. May many a one, girls, have as good reason some day for using the same words about you.

Be eager for opportunities both at home and abroad, but not too eager either, for we may become greedy of power just as we may of money. Keep within one's limits in life. It isn't everything, and indeed the sober joys of influence are enough to satisfy anyone.

The best influence lies in example. In real genuine and a consistent life there is nothing very persuasive; never forget that. Be, then, as near perfection as you can. What am I saying? Whatever you may think about yourselves, your friends, the perfect women, as perhaps I have told you before, do not run thirteen to the dozen. Indeed, someone says there are only two good women in the whole world, and of those one is dead and the other cannot be found. I only mention this consideration, however, as a curiosity, my own opinion being that it would be absurd to make a courtship of this number of good women at least to every good man.

If the best influence lies in example, the worst very often lies in advice. You think, "Oh, this is a hit at you. Well, if the can't fit you, little one, wear it. Nobody likes being preached to, or to have even the best counsel administered for all the world as if it were made of horseshoes. Why, just like my Nanette, who wrote the other day a letter of advice to her brother, and "I won't give you the advice, "she added, "from your poor sister who loves your. Who could take it amiss when it was put in that way?"

When you have influence, don't boast about it or encourage other people to boast about it for you. A friend once told me he had overheard a girl's mother telling how her daughter could twist round her little finger. "From that moment," he said, "the test was impossible." His self-love got up in arms at the suggestion that he was not quite a free agent. So if any of you girls think you yourselves born to rule the unregenerate or any one single individuals in it, you had better keep the notion to yourselves.

Influence is not to be measured by the stir it makes in starting. Knowledge is said, not accompanied by so loud a report as cannon-balls, but they echo a great deal longer through the universe. Example, too, is a pleasant sort of speech, but it is far more powerful than if you kept your tongue wagging all day like a lambkin's tail.

Words, however, are not to be despised; the great thing is to take care to have them few and choose them well. Such was the case with one I remember, whose name the world never heard, and whose address, if she is still living, I do not know. All I am quite certain about is that by gentle words, united to a most perfect character, she acquired so great an influence over all her friends that one of them said to me no later than yesterday, "As to my thoughts, I am not sure to whom they belong; I know not whether they are mine or not."

JAMES MASON.

EXAMINATIONS, AND HOW TO PREPARE FOR THEM.

HERE CAN SCARCELY BE A READER OF THIS GIRL'S OWN PAPER WHO DOES NOT KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT EXAMINATIONS, EITHER BY READING, BY CONVERSATION, OR FROM PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE. IT IS NOT IN THE LEAST TO BE SUPPOSED THAT ALL REASONS HOLD THE SAME VIEWS WITH REGARD TO THEM. SOME LIKE EXAMINATIONS; SOME DISLIKE THEM; SOME THINK THEY ARE A GOOD THING; SOME THINK THEY DO HARM. LET US TRY TO DRAW SOME OF THE CAUSES FOR THESE WIDELY DIFFERENT VIEWS, AND CALMLY CONSIDER THE QUESTION OF EXAMINATIONS IN GENERAL.

The word examination literally means to test by a balance, to weigh exactly; educationally, that is, in the sense in which we wish to know what we may be said to know, it may be said, by question. An examination may test our general knowledge without any special preparation for it, or it may follow a particular course of study, and it may be either written or oral.

Everyone knows that there are some things which one has "sort of idea," a hazy notion about, and which are "all about it," but that if one were called upon to make a speech, or to give a written account of the subject in question, one would make rather a poor showing. This being the case is clear that we do not always know as much as we think we know. The difference between what some people know, and what they think they know, is the strong argument in favour of examinations is that it is good for us to know exactly what we know, or at least to be tested by another standard than our own, in order to prevent our falling into false positions, or attempting to undertake work for which we are totally incompetent.

Take, for instance, some one who thinks he knows "all about" medicine and setting up for a doctor, or someone who thinks he knows all about ships and the sea and applying for the captainship of a vessel. It may be possible that if each of these men was able to command the position sought without any form of inquiry being made or proof to be given that he was capable of doing the work, people have acted in this way, if not exactly in these special cases, in a fact, and a fact which has been productive of very injurious results. Notably has this been the case with teachers, it not having been unusual to suppose that anyone can teach.

Happily this way of thinking is now beginning to be obsolete, and examinations are doing their utmost to place education on a higher level. Schools are inspected, pupils are examined, teachers obtain certificates, and many positions both for girls and boys, men and women, can only be obtained by public examination. It is a less question of the place for the person, than whether the person suits the place.

Examinations are certainly an established fact, and it is probable that the earnest desire, on the part of those who are really sincere and thoroughly honest, is the main cause of their enormous extension. They may be carried to excess is possible. That intensely competitive examinations are healthy is doubtful. That all examinations are prejudicial to health is an utterly false assertion. The causes of the disapprove into which examinations sometimes fall are worthy of investigation, and they must be sought for in the many and various motives of the different grades of persons connected with them. It is scarcely necessary to say that none of these persons are entirely disinterested; they include children, parents, teachers, and examiners. I think it may safely be said that some faults belong to each of these classes, and though I am not disposed to discuss each separately, yet the general character of this remark will be borne out by what follows.

Examinations have a right use and a wrong one, and they have also their disadvantages; and consequently we find that there are bad results as well as good ones to be traced to them. A list follows to the best of my recollection:

1. As tests of exact and real knowledge they are invaluable; they place one in an honest position with regard to one's fellows. They enable us to distinguish between a person that is not what we take him to be from what we fancied we knew. They point out to us those subjects of study which require our special attention; they show us our weak points, besides giving us the satisfaction of knowing that we have accomplished some-
thing. In other words they encourage us to work and correct our errors in writing, and help us to become 'realities' and not 'shams.'

2. As encouragements their value is scarcely of less importance, and to those who are brave enough to work upon love, then to itself the satisfaction which comes from having done well in an examination is beyond description.

3. As guides, especially to private students, who have few opportunities of judging from any other standpoint than their own, they place the position they take in the world at large when measured by a general standard of opinion.

Many points might be given here, but we will give another view of the case, what has been called the wrong uses of examinations:

1. The narrowing of the depth and breadth of intelligent culture and the degeneracy into a system of cram and superficial knowledge in order to secure a "pass" must always be looked upon by true educaetionists as a wrong use of examinations, yet how often are these objections neglected?

2. The pushing of quick pupils to obtain distinctions, to the disadvantage of the moderate and slow workers in a class, is another wrong use to which some persons put examinations.

3. The undue pressure put upon some to secure success, whether self-inflicted or otherwise, cannot be a good or right use of examinations, and yet how often are these objections disregarded?

4. Injudicious parents in some cases urging their children forward; enthusiasm on the part of young brains; or ambitious and over-ruled students pursuing a reckless and ill-regulated course of study to pass an examination, which in its very preparation has eaten out the life and health of the inquiry into this phase of the subject might be pursued much further, but we will proceed to some of the evil uses of examinations, both good and bad, and leave our readers to decide what they consider to be advantages or disadvantages. In their reflection they will ask them to consider whether the system of examinations is always at fault, or whether the evils which arise may not spring in many cases rather from its use.

1. Examinations help us to establish an approximate standard of the acquirements and culture of people in the mass. This enables us to classify and arrange persons and things. It helps us to put the "right person in the right place.

2. Examinations often require great detail and need of reference, hence they encourage patient research and steady perseverance. In many cases they create a desire for the best, for excellence in everything one undertakes, for the spirit of competition which is necessary for legitimate ground upon which to form a judgment on a given subject; in fact, they tend to produce the most admirable order of mind.

3. But examinations are very often productive of undue emulation, jealousy, and prejudice. They sometimes, especially when success (as often happens) for "cramming" produce a competitive, ill-regulated, and contrary order of mind: we know these people tolerably well, and give them a class to themselves the world. We call them "prigs."

4. Some examinations have such definitely marked features that, after a little carefu

lysis of previously given questions, their requirements may be reduced to the state of a series of "cramming." In this case, it is often the case that the "adventurers" both among teachers and pupils, to "cram" up to the particular points and produce an artificial and much-to-be-deplored degraded atmosphere. One might compare this to a veneered furniture, plated metal, &c., which are often well got up, expensive, showy, but valueless.

5. Examinations are accused of producing nervous diseases and mental disorders. We cannot deny that they sometimes do this. But why? Are there no circumstances to blame outside of examinations? What little child is there who is incapable of answering a question? Who is thrown into a state of nervous excitement because a question of no great importance is put to him? There may be some children of this kind, but are they healthy? What boys or girls are there who will not have to answer many questions during life; accept many positions not always quite in keeping with their wishes; fulfill many duties which are not real pleasures? What man or woman there who will not be called upon to pass through many judiciously set steps in many duties of life; to undertake many duties which will not be perfectly agreeable.

5. My reader who has so far followed will agree with me that some sort of preparation should be given to the little one for the duties of youth, and to the youth for the duties of manhood. Preparation could be given in many cases than by a steady system of examinations. One point only I insist on, the examination shall be suited to the age, acquirements, and temper of the examined. By degrees the nervousness, indecision, hesitation, fear, &c., will all disappear, and a clear, cool, decided, well-regulated mind will come out of such a course of training. When people plunge headlong into impossible studies and work at impossible speed to make up for defective training or idleness, or to satisfy an unworthy ambition, or from some other cause, then these evils will result; but I deny that the examination itself is the sole cause of the evil.

6. One evil I should like to point out specially to the readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER. It is the increased production of unsatisfactory books, which as a rule, replete with errors, but they are cheap and have a wide circulation. They should be avoided. They are deceptive, and those who build up their minds on such a foundation will be shallow, frivolous, and deceived.

Let us now for a short time turn our attention to the best methods of preparing for an examination.

All who have read carefully up to this point will realise that the writer assumes that no one would attempt to pass a public examination without having a good foundation of general knowledge. Now we may fairly launch out into the question of particulars.

1. First of all, the syllabus of subjects which you will be expected to answer questions upon.

2. Obtain the necessary books required.

3. Fix the certain amount of time to be devoted to each subject and stick to it.

4. Concentrate your whole thoughts and attention on the subject in hand. Do not for one moment suppose that you can comfortably carry on a conversation with a friend while you are "getting up" the prescribed pages.

5. Make from memory notes of the portions you feel you have mastered, and compare these with those which you are not so familiar with.

6. Clear up every difficulty as you go, either by reference to other books or to persons to whom you can apply.

7. Never be satisfied with "that will do" unless you have done your best.

8. Provide yourself with copies of questions, which have already been given in previous examinations, and test yourself by them.

A good preparation for examination can scarcely fail to produce a good pass, and to secure this let us sum up a few points to be remembered:

1. Carry out fully all the printed rules provided for you.

2. Write clearly and distinctly, and spell well.

3. Write your answers (for the most part) at once on the examination paper. Do not make rough copies. There is not time to copy, for one thing; and in copying mistakes often occur.

4. Do not write something that you happen to know in the place of something that you happen not to know. Answer the question meant as it is meant, and that is the point. Answer the question, the whole question, and nothing but the question, will be a good motto for examinants.

5. Do not spend too much time over the first few questions. Find out how many questions are expected of you and arrange the time given to the best possible advantage.

6. Read your question twice before writing your answer, and be sure that you understand exactly what is required of you.

This inquiry, though far from complete, will perhaps open up a new view of the subject to some who are interested in examinations.

It will be clear that there are several ways of viewing an examination before we give a judgment as to its use, and that there are certain natural defects in examination systems as in most other things in this life. We do not put them forward as being perfect, but we do wish to show that those who read raise leaves and abuse them most are probably the people who have never thought of them in the true light, and who include among them some persons who regard them in the light of new ideas, innovations, and as instruments of torture.

J. P. M.