

CHAPTER IX

EXAMINATIONS AND PRIVILEGES

THE aim of the higher schools in Germany is to give an *Allgemeine Bildung*, but it should be clearly understood that this liberal education is intended at the same time to be the first stage in a practical preparation for life. Every higher school is at once a place of liberal culture and a fitting school for some specific vocation or profession. The union of these two ideals has gradually come in the course of the present century to be well understood and everywhere recognised as inevitable. This fact is responsible for much of the confusion and uncertainty to be met with in the educational system.

Aim of Higher
Schools.

Theoretically and historically, too, in a degree, the secondary education of Germany is absolutely divorced from the practical affairs of life. "First make a man, and let the man look out for himself," is the motto that perhaps best expresses the idea of the old school-masters. "In making a man, make one that will be good for something," is the principle underlying the administration of the higher schools at the present time. School curricula and pedagogical theories, as a rule, emphasize the cultural side; governmental regulation and the official management of school affairs emphasize the practical side.

Unites
Theoretical and
Practical.

The system of examinations and privileges in operation in all Germany bears striking testimony to the fact that the higher schools have a special mission in combining liberal culture and practical ability.

In the first place, the very method of conducting examina-

tions is designed to test the power to use knowledge rather than the extent of information. It is not so much what a pupil has learned that counts, as what he can do with it; not *Wissen*, so much as *Können*. That ineubus of written examinations, which weighs so heavily on British schools, and which is so popular in some parts of America, particularly in the State of New York and some Canadian provinces, would never be tolerated for a day in Germany, not even by the most conservative pedagogue of the old school. They would say that by such means you may gauge more or less accurately of a pupil's knowledge and skill in displaying it, but it leaves untouched the very facts which an educator most wants to know—the desire for further study, power of will, love of home and country, religious feelings and the appreciation of the good, the true and the beautiful. Not what a man has, but what he is, is the true test of educational progress. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Purpose of
Examinations.

The Practical
Side.

Next, it will be observed that with the completion of successive grades in the higher schools certain privileges are granted which determine admission to all the higher vocations and professions. This makes not only each school, but each grade, a step in a general course of professional or business training. The successful working of such a plan requires that young men on leaving school shall know something of practical worth and that they have the ability to use it in further preparation for their respective careers in life. The student who completes a gymnasial course must have definite knowledge of those subjects which he will need in the university; all students, no matter what their future occupations, need to be put in touch with the best that the national life and thought has to offer. The schools are confined to a definite curriculum, which is prescribed by the state; its workings are supervised by the state; and the state examines the results, and points out the possible lines of future advancement. But the way in which this is done is specially instructive.

A pupil's promotion within the school depends upon (1) the quality of his daily work, (2) private and public examinations and (3) the judgment of his instructors. The kind of school in which he is entered and the length of his course therein determine the possibilities of future study and occupation.

Conditions of
Promotion.

A teacher is required to note the daily work, conduct, industry and attention of his pupils, and from time to time to grade them accordingly. This should be done whenever the teacher has seen enough of his pupil to enable him to form sound judgment, say, daily in the lower classes, where the teacher has better opportunity to judge, and at least once a week in any case.

The Marking
System.

No checking of errors as they occur, and no marking by percentages, is allowed under any circumstances. The teacher who should attempt to note in class each mistake made by his pupils, as though his business were to find errors rather than give instruction, would be excluded from a German school as unfit for his office. The designation of grades which are officially recommended for use in the higher schools is as follows: "Very Good," "Good," "Satisfactory," "Barely Satisfactory," "Unsatisfactory." The value of written work, as class exercises, notes and essays, is estimated in the same way and noted in the class records. At the end of each quarter, as a rule, and necessarily at Easter, Michaelmas, and Christmas, the reports of all teachers are gathered in and entered in the individual record-books of the pupils. The pupil's book gives the name of the pupil, the class to which he belongs, the number of pupils in the class, his industry and attention, his marks in the various studies, list of punishments received, notice of promotion and a space for remarks, followed by the signatures of the director and class-master (*Ordinarius*). After this report has been countersigned by the parent or guardian of the pupil, it is returned to the school, and placed among the school archives. It belongs to the school, and not to the pupil. The parent's signature is evidence that he has seen the official record of his son's work, and is fully acquainted

The Abschlussprüfung, which comes at the end of the first six school-years in the nine-year schools, and which corresponds to the leaving examination of the *Pro-gymnasien*, the *Realprogymnasien* and the *Real-schulen*, is of recent introduction. From the official statistics of the school-year of 1889-1890 it was found that, out of a total attendance of 135,357 in the secondary schools of Prussia, 20,038 left at the end of the year. Of these, 4,105 completed the course, 8,051 left at the end of six years, and 7,882 dropped out of the lower classes. It is seen, therefore, that of those leaving school forty per cent. were satisfied with a six years' course, while only twenty per cent. secured the *Reifezeugnis*. The important fact to be noted is that only 368 (from higher burgher schools) of those who left school at the end of the six years went out with a theoretically complete education. All others were in schools whose curricula required three years longer in attendance. This was one of the problems which engaged the attention of the Berlin School Conference of 1890. Up to that time all of the secondary schools, with the exception of the higher burgher schools, were organized for the express benefit of those who completed the nine years' course. It was recognized that nothing could be done for the thirty-nine per cent. who left school during the first five years, but for the forty per cent. who remained only long enough to secure the certificate for one year's military service

The Mid-Course.
Examination.

Reasons for Its
Establishment.

The general regulations for the conduct of leaving examinations are the same in the *Realgymnasium* and *Oberrealschule* as in the *Gymnasium*. In each case the work of the last year of the course indicates the character and scope of the examination.

The *Realgymnasium* and the *Oberrealschule* require in the written examination (1) a German essay; (2) a French or English essay; (3) a translation from German into French or English; (4) four problems in mathematics — one each from algebra, plane geometry, solid geometry, trigonometry or analytical geometry; (5) one problem in physics or chemistry; and, in the *Realgymnasium*, (6) a translation from Latin into German. The oral examination is confined to religion, French, Eng-

Examination in
Other Higher
Schools.

lish, history, mathematics and either chemistry or physics, according to which is called for in the written test.

The candidate is not passed if his rank in German, or in both modern languages, is "Unsatisfactory." If "Unsatisfactory" in one modern language, he must be at least "Good" in the other, or in German or in mathematics. A realgymnasiast ranking "Unsatisfactory" in mathematics must be at least "Good" in the modern languages or in German; a candidate from the *Oberrealschule* who is "Unsatisfactory" in mathematics must be at least "Good" in physics or chemistry.

It has been repeatedly pointed out in this essay that the higher schools of Germany serve purposes other than merely giving a liberal education. It is inevitable that a state system of education should be controlled in the interests of the state, but under a bu-
reaucratic government there is danger of using the schools in the interests of the class that happens to be in power. The tendency in Germany to regulate everything that can be regulated applies to the control of public education as to everything else. Little chance is allowed anywhere to individual initiative ; small credence is given to the ability of the masses to act aright. The German theory is that it is better to avoid mistakes than to make them even for the sake of gaining experience.

The System of
Privileges.

It is with reluctance that I turn to the system of privileges so intimately associated with the examination system. It is at this point that the grip of the government is most seriously

It has been repeatedly pointed out in this essay that the higher schools of Germany serve purposes other than merely giving a liberal education. It is inevitable that a state system of education should be controlled in the interests of the state, but under a bu-
reaucratic government there is danger of using the schools in the interests of the class that happens to be in power. The tendency in Germany to regulate everything that can be regulated applies to the control of public education as to everything else. Little chance is allowed anywhere to individual initiative ; small credence is given to the ability of the masses to act aright. The German theory is that it is better to avoid mistakes than to make them even for the sake of gaining experience.

The System of
Privileges.

It is with reluctance that I turn to the system of privileges so intimately associated with the examination system. It is at this point that the grip of the government is most seriously

of army service. Only those who gave promise of special ability were awarded the privilege. Students in the higher classes of the *Gymnasien*, even down to *Tertia*, who satisfied these requirements might receive the recognition. In 1822 the completion of *Tertia* was required, and since that time the standard has been gradually raised until, in 1868, the minimum requirement was set at the end of the *Untersecunda*, where it has since remained. Other changes have also been made. The privilege was granted first only to those who gave special promise of professional success. For thirty years, however, it has been held up as a prize for all who could pass a definite examination, notwithstanding that some might not intend to enter upon professional study at all, or even remain longer in school. As a matter of fact this latter class now includes more than one-half of all those who secure the privilege.

Present
Conditions.

With the foundation of the North German Confederation and, later, of the Empire, the system introduced by Prussia was adopted by the other states. In order to secure a greater uniformity in methods and an approved standard, an Imperial School Commission (*Reichs-Schulcommission*) was appointed in 1875, whose chief function is to advise the imperial chancellor as to what schools may with propriety be granted the privilege of awarding the certificate which frees its holder from one year of military service. This commission consists of six members: Four represent Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, and Würtemberg; a fifth member is chosen biennially from Baden, Hesse, Alsace-Lorraine and Mecklenberg-Schwerin in turn; the sixth member represents the other German states, likewise in terms of two years. This is the only attempt made to unite the different states of the empire in any matter pertaining to school affairs. The members of the commission are all teachers, or officers in the Education Departments of the different states.

The Imperial
School
Commission.