

The clearness and precision, the force and structural perfection, the combined power and grace of modern speech, have made modern languages the worthy successors of the tongues of ancient Greece and Rome; and the study of French, German, and English, of Spanish and Italian, must henceforth constitute an indispensable element in the curriculum of our schools, both private and public.

JOHN JAMES WILD.

GERMAN.

The German papers were, as a whole, the best sent in for several years. The number of candidates receiving honours, as reference to the return-sheets will show, is very large, and many of the papers were excellent. Many candidates seem, however, to have insufficiently realised that German is a living language still used in every-day life. For instance, the German form of such constantly occurring names as Alsace, Lorraine, Vienna, Austria, Venice was very seldom known.

Study of the classic German authors will hardly enable students to give directions to a cabman to drive to a railway station, to order a dinner, to go through a simple transaction at a post-office, or to write a short business letter, and so on. In addition, therefore, to the study of the best modern authors may be recommended the reading of the most ordinary parts (including advertisements, excluding leading articles) of any good German newspaper.

It should be understood that candidates may write German either in English or German characters.

ALEX. FRASER MORRISON.

ARITHMETIC.

The results of the examination in arithmetic can hardly be thought satisfactory, when it is considered that four marks out of a possible 10 were all that were required for a pass, and that in questions 1, 2, and 4 on multiplication and division of decimals a full mark was given for results very slightly inaccurate, and a half-mark for a good method and an approximately correct result, and that in the questions in commercial arithmetic a half-mark was always given for an intelligent attempt.

Considerable time was wasted by many of the candidates in calculating money results to extraordinary degrees of accuracy, some of them even to the extent of the thousand million millionth of a penny. It does not seem ever to have occurred or been pointed out to these that the smallest coin in circulation in Australia is one halfpenny.

I was pleased to find that a majority of the candidates were able to solve the problem of supplying the missing figures to the multiplication sum, a large number taking the question as a simple example on common measure as was intended, and surprised that only a small minority were able to deduct a sixpenny income tax from an income.

The candidates from the country centres did better than those who presented themselves in Melbourne; those from Warrnambool did decidedly the best, 74 per cent. of the candidates from this centre passing.

THOMAS R. LYLE.

GEOGRAPHY.

In this subject the quality of the work done was distinctly inferior to that of recent years. In the map—that of Africa—a great want of knowledge of the relative positions of the European possessions was noticeable. Few attempted to give the principal provinces of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and many of those who did try annexed German or Balkan states or both. Most of the candidates, to whom the terms Celt, Slav, and Teuton were familiar, had the vaguest knowledge of the distribution of the peoples. A monsoon was frequently confused with a trade wind proper, and few candidates knew any method of determining latitude. Questions 2, 9, and 10 were answered most satisfactorily.

J. E. MACKAY.

CHEMISTRY.

The results of this examination are much less satisfactory than those of last year. Of the 23 honour candidates, 13 had no claim to honours; and of these five failed outright (three of them earning the distinction of nothing per cent), and five others would have been rejected had any but a very merciful standard been fixed. In the pass paper the results were still worse. Only four succeeded in passing out of 35 who entered; and the great majority of those rejected failed not because there are things they do not know, but because there is nothing (in chemistry) that they do know. In this paper the last question (eight) dealt with a part of the subject not included in the prescribed pass work. To neutralise this error of his own, the examiner decided not to count the question at all, unless he could do so in a candidate's favour. The matter gave no trouble, however, for there were very few papers from which it was possible to discover that any part of the subject had been prescribed.

It seems necessary to urge once more upon candidates and those who regulate their work the fact that a science like chemistry should be either treated with respect or let alone. No good can result from viewing it as a duffers' subject, or from attempting to teach it in the odd hour or so a week spared from the more serious studies. Chemistry should not be coupled with dancing; or, if it is, the University should not be asked to pronounce upon the performance. It is very probable that those who are trying to teach chemistry in the schools are not to blame for the wholesale failure of their pupils. They too frequently have to deal with boys who are regarded as weak in other subjects, and have to do it without proper appliances, and in too little time. In such a case the task is a hopeless one. The papers sent in by a few of the honour candidates were excellent, and the perusal of them gave the impression that there must be at least one school in Melbourne where the claims of science are appreciated; but that this is the case has been proved by the published results of former examinations.

ORME MASSON.

PHYSICS.

For this examination 131 candidates in all presented themselves. Of these seven obtained honours, 38 passed, and 86 failed. The pass work was very bad; only nine candidates out of 108 got as much as half-marks, while 35 were below quarter-marks. The honours work was almost equally discouraging. Only one candidate attained second-class standard, and of the rest at least two-thirds ought never to have entered for honours, as they only attained either a very risky pass or a failure.

Lack of intelligent preparation accounts for the whole disgraceful exhibition—for it is nothing less. "Stock" questions, of a kind generally done more or less well in previous years, have on this occasion educated as many blunders as those intended to test the students' thinking powers. From the latter one has learnt to expect nonsensical answers, but it is not encouraging to find the nonsense universal. One result was a complete surprise; not a single candidate knew how the unit of time was realised in practice. Are clocks and watches unknown in Victorian schools?

E. F. J. LOVE.

PHYSIOLOGY.

The pass paper in this subject evidently suited the candidates, since 231 out of a possible 330 reached the pass standard, a result yielding a percentage of some seven or eight above that of the corresponding examination of last year.

To enter more into detail, 10 obtained 80 per cent. or over, 39 from 70 to 79 per cent., 58 from 60 to 69 per cent., and 124 from 50 to 60 per cent. of marks. The following candidates obtained 75 per cent. or over—results alike very satisfactory to the candidates and to the teachers who prepared them:—154, 167, 172, 209, 289, 293, 393, 406, 427, 433, 484, 485, 544, 546, 599, 645, 664, 683, 700, 776, 783, 805, 826, 871, 890, 927, 946. Of these candidates, numbers 172, 484, 485, and 645 stood out well above the rest with a percentage of 85 or more of marks. The paper sent in by number 485 was of exceptional merit, containing, as it did, very few errors, being carefully illustrated, and only falling short on the side of brevity in one or two questions. It is a pity that such a paper as this could not be published in full as a model of what a matriculation paper in physiology should be. The lady candidates who entered for the subject numbered 120. Of these 75 per cent. passed, as compared with 67 per cent. of the male candidates, but of the 27 who obtained 75 or more per cent. of marks the male candidates show a slight advantage over the lady candidates, there being 16 of the former to 11 of the latter.

The papers of the honour candidates do not call for much comment. Although the majority of them reached the honour standard, none obtained a very high percentage, owing possibly to the length of the paper, but more probably to want of judgment in not apportioning attention to each of the five questions allowed to be answered. If one or two questions are entirely omitted it is impossible to recover the marks lost upon them by increased attention to the remaining questions. Each question has a certain number of marks allotted to it, and a fairly full answer will secure these marks, provided glaring errors do not creep in. A complete essay on a question cannot do more than this, and it generally results in the enforced omission of information attaching to the other questions, which the candidate could have answered satisfactorily if only a more equal distribution of time had been followed. The paper was rather a long one, and allowance for its length was made by the examiners in compiling the returns.

The following are some of the weak points in the papers presented by the pass candidates:—

First, as to the anatomy of the frog. There still exists a lurking regret in the mind of some candidates that this forms part of the requirements for the pass examination. Hence the attempt either to ignore entirely the questions on the frog or to answer them in a haphazard manner. This is much to be regretted, for, as pointed out in previous report, no better nor more convenient introduction to the anatomy and physiology of man can be found than an intimate knowledge of the same facts in a frog. Dealing with an animal of comparatively small size the student is able to grasp more intelligently the relationship of the various parts of each system, such as alimentary, circulatory, nervous, and skeletal, than is possible in higher forms. Once a clear conception is gained of these systems and their function, the facts become at once of educational value in their application to everyday life. That the preparation of this part of the work is still hurried was evidenced again and again in the answers of the candidates relating to the organs in the body-cavity of the frog, since quite 50 per cent. contained reference only to the alimentary system, and in the majority of cases this was illustrated in such a manner as to show that the candidates had never actually seen a specimen dissected. As pointed out before, since the frog is usually dissected from the ventral surface illustrative diagrams are best understood when drawn from that aspect, and it has been suggested that pupils should be encouraged to make dissections themselves, under the supervision of a teacher, and to compile sketches from the animal thus dissected, each system being taken in turn and illustrated by a series of detached drawings.

Another fault calls for criticism. This relates to the omission of illustrative sketches. These need not possess artistic merit. Indeed, the exigencies of the examination preclude this. Rough diagrams, however, if true to fact, will often save pages of letter-press, and thus economise time which can be better spent in arranging facts necessary to the answer in hand. The questions are set with the idea that diagrams will be freely used in answering them, and no candidate can possibly get through the whole of the questions without the economy of time which such diagrams afford. The necessity of such illustrative sketches is distinctly prescribed in the calendar, and attention is also directed to the fact at the head of each paper, and yet the direction is entirely ignored by many of the candidates, or shelved with the feeblest possible attempt to conform to it. In future inattention to

Perhaps the greatest fault of all which peeped out of every paper showing any marks of ability was discursiveness. Thus, the question on the attachment of the limbs to the body drew forth elaborate details on joints in general; the structures connected with the buccal cavity suggested short essays on the sense-organs, the alimentary system, and, in a few cases, the nervous system; the question having reference to the minute anatomy and blood supply to the liver inspired lengthy notices of the functions of the liver. In cases such as this one or two questions were left unfinished, owing to "want of time" and sympathy solicited for this reason. Candidates are reminded that such extraneous efforts earn no marks, but tend rather to weaken their position.

In spite, however, of points which call for adverse criticism there is room for much congratulation in regard to the general results in this subject. Many enthusiastic teachers are evidently at work, and physiology bids fair to become in a few years one of the most useful and successful subjects taken up by the candidates who seek for success in the matriculation examination.

As an aid towards that object a junior text-book, lately issued by Macmillan and Co., entitled "Physiology for Beginners," by Foster and Shore, can be suggested, serving, as it does, as an introduction to Huxley's "Lessons."

WALTER FIELDER.

BOTANY.

The papers, both pass and honour, were perhaps slightly easier than usual, and were well done. The Ballarat candidates, and those examined in the Wilson-hall, were particularly good. There was nothing in the papers calling for special comment.

J. STEPHEN HART.

MUSIC.

Fifty-two candidates, the highest number yet entered for the music examination in music, presented themselves, of whom 35 obtained a pass and 10 honours.

The general standard obtained throughout at the examination (theoretical and practical) was highly satisfactory, in many instances excellent, and was undoubtedly a great improvement on previous years.

The least satisfactory answers to the pass papers were to the questions on figured basses, and "the writing out of passages containing phrasing marks and contractions as they actually sound."

As to the working out of the figured basses, students are advised to pay more attention to obtain a melodious soprano part in the first instance, whilst keeping the harmonic progressions in view, and afterwards adding the two inner parts, which may be kept smoother and quieter; more flowing inner parts will be obtained when they have studied counterpoint, which, as a rule, should not be taken up till the student has a fair mastery over all ordinary harmonic progressions.

In regard to "the writing out phrases as they actually sound," candidates did not treat the legato and staccato signs correctly. It is well to write out phrases as they sound before attempting to play them.

The honour candidates, on the whole, did splendidly. Most of the weak points which were noted in the report of last November were this year agreeably absent. There are signs that ear exercises, which cannot be over-estimated, have been well cultivated. These studies should be diligently practised from the first lesson of a child's musical education, if only five minutes of each lesson be allotted to them.

With regard to the practical examination it is gratifying to see the good work that is being done throughout the colony. Comparing candidates who presented themselves four years ago with those of this examination, the general progress is remarkable. The pieces prepared were far more suitable, and, therefore, far more justice was done them than in previous years. It is more satisfactory to have easier works of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven well performed (artistically and technically) than difficult works indifferently rendered. Many honour candidates seem to be under the impression that to obtain honours it is necessary to prepare difficult works of the alovenamed composers. This is incorrect. Good performances of works such as Bach's 2 and 3 part inventions; Haydn and Mozart sonatas, and the easier works of Beethoven are quite sufficient.

A list of works is being prepared, giving pianoforte and violin candidates the general standard required for pass and honours.

A novelty in this examination was the presentation of violin candidates.

We have the honour to be, your obedient servants,

W. A. LAVER,  
S. M'BURNEY, Mus. Doc.

Dec. 29, 1898.