IFE at the Institute is, at all times, a very busy one, and undoubtedly its most trying periods are the few weeks during and immediately preceding the semi annual and annual examinations when, after months of close application to work, the student finds himself called upon to exert his most energetic efforts. The anxiety of such times is especially great in the case of subjects which, from their nature or from the preference of the instructor, are considered by means of lectures, without recitations or written exercises; for the student, realizing that by the result of the examination alone will his proficiency in these subjects be judged, feels compelled to crowd into a few hours their careful review, amounting, in many instances, to almost a second course of preparation.

There is no use in upholding the highly impracticable theory that each lesson should be so thoroughly prepared as to require only the most hasty review; for it is not by the first reading of a difficult line of study, but by a review, after a consideration of the whole subject, that the connection and relative importance of the details of each day's work can be grasped. Nor would it be at all advisable for instructors in certain branches of study to substitute for lecturing, with its opportunities for collecting and presenting to classes the best information from many sources, the limitations of text-book study and recitations. But, without advocating either of these plans, there still remains a way by which the anxiety in regard to approaching final examinations, and the consequent overwork of preparation, could be greatly lessened; and that is by the more general adoption of a system of intermediate examinations, held in place of occasional lectures and without previous warning. By their means, the progress made by a student would be better known to himself and to his instructor, and their results, with any records which might be kept of recitations, should be of as much importance in determining his standing as the results of the final examinations.

This plan is carried out in some studies of the first and second years, but is almost entirely lacking in the third and fourth years, where it would seem to be just as much needed. It must secure less variation in the amount of work done by those who, from exceptional ability or from aversion to continuous study, leave their preparation until required by an approaching examination; increased fairness in the standing of those who are conscientious in every-day work; and fairness, also, to those who are not, like others of no greater proficiency, enabled, by the mental excitement of a final examination, to do better than in recitations. Such a system avoids the evident injustice of judging a student's knowledge of a subject entirely by his answers to a few questions, which, however well they may cover the work, cannot be thoroughly comprehensive, and may, as chance decides, be very familiar or comparatively strange to him.