

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

FOR THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

DISCIPLINE AND DRILL.

It is possible to enumerate many things essential to a good school. Among these we may direct attention to the two named above. Every one professes to know the importance and value of these, and therefore, they often have not a sufficient prominence in our notions of a good school.

To be a good disciplinarian is to reach a high point in the teaching profession. But grievous errors exist, as to what constitutes good discipline, and a good disciplinarian. Some, we trust, but few, think that severity and discipline are synonymous. This opinion prevailed in the olden days of the rod, and the ferule. Happily for education, and the boys, this time-honored conclusion has been assailed, and its power broken. Educationists now believe, that the most decided discipline, and firm school government are compatible with kindness and forbearance.

A teacher, if ambitious to have a *good school*, must at the beginning resolve to have system and order; to have order he must have system, and it must be presumed that an efficient teacher will have a clearly defined and well-digested system of *his own*. This he will constantly examine, and improve as experience may suggest. Every teacher should understand what system works best under his hand, and should therefore have his own school law, as well as the general one; nor is that teacher worth much whose experience has not suggested a system of discipline, and a mode of instruction suited to his views of school operations.

On entering upon his work, after the preliminary arrangements are made, the teacher should publish distinctly and decidedly, the rules by which teacher and pupils are to govern themselves, for, as far as possible, the government of a school should be self-government, and each pupil should be made to understand the interest he has in honest and cheerful submission to school discipline, and, that their regulations are compatible with, and conducive to his progress—that their violation is destructive of order and incompatible with educational progress. Pupils should understand, that while they are law abiding, nothing in the way of discipline will be known but the interchange of mutual kindness and good will, and that on all subjects bearing on the interest of the school, teacher and pupil have a common interest and a common aim. With equal distinctness should it be understood that the insubordination of one, disturbs the whole and is subversive of the entire school interest, and hence it must be imperative with the teacher to insist upon submission to known rules, and under no pretext whatever sanction the violation of a law essential to the good of all.

And here the governing ability and power of a Teacher will appear,—we may say his professional value. For, to maintain order, to insist with firmness and unflinching resolution upon obedience and submission to school law, and to do this with a calm, dignified deportment, consistent with position and correct influence, with no angry words, or excited passion, is evidence that a high professional position has been reached—a skill and power to govern acquired, that will, under all circumstances, ensure success. The Teacher who has reached this point is a good disciplinarian. He need not use the rod, harsh and angry words are not required, nor will the vulgarisms, *dunce*, *blockhead*, *dolt*, and such like names be heard. The firm utterance of calm determination, with the reiteration of confessed and reasonable obligation, will be sufficient at all times.

The first element in school government, is self-government, and no class of men requires this more than Teachers. An angry man is utterly unfit to discipline a youth, and it is to be feared that many a youth with excellent points of character, and talent of a high order, has been lost to society through the misgovernment of impetuous teachers. Self-government is almost inseparable

from reflection, and the reflecting teacher will aim to understand the dispositions and peculiarities of each member of his little community and soon will have formed a correct estimate of the character of all under his instructions. The reflecting teacher knows how to turn such knowledge to a good account in adjusting his discipline to the varied tempers and habits of the pupils. A discipline that has for its basis self-government and reflection will elevate alike teacher and pupil. The former will realize the moral power he is exercising and be strengthened in it, while the pupil operated upon by this power will receive and be conscious of its elevating authority, for as the anger of a teacher, reproduces itself in the pupil, so the self-government of the teacher will produce a spirit of its own likeness. A boy under wise and christian discipline will be under a power ever acting upon his highest and noblest capabilities, and quietly developing a future character replete with the elements of unlimited success. But while a rash passionate teacher should have no place in our schools, we must not confound physical inertness, and mental inactivity, with the calm dignified character of the model teacher. A teacher intellectually indolent is unsuited to the work of an instructor. Those needed are, of course, educated men, men of physical and mental activity, uniting with this, a quiet, but firm determination to exercise upon the surrounding youth an authority tending to a moral elevation. We are happy in knowing that there are in our schools a number of teachers of this class; they are model men, and the sections possessing them have a treasure of no small value; they are to be honored as the men whose influence will do more for our children and for our country, than mines of material wealth.

But the number of such men is by far too small, and it should be the aim of all connected with our school system to bring such men to the front of their profession, and cast about them that esteem and liberal support which merit and usefulness ever demand. Sections ought not willingly to part with such men, but retain them, and a very few years will demonstrate their worth. Efficient teachers do not love change except for reasons which the people themselves control. A good teacher knows that it takes time to establish a school, and that when once fixed, the day of drudgery is numbered with the past.

At the head of this article we directed attention to School Drill, and connected it with Discipline, for by some association of thoughts, these two things are almost identical. What are we to understand by the phrase so often heard “a thorough drill”? The term has a military sound, and hence we inquire why are recruits for the army drilled unless it is, that they may be perfected in all that relates to the profession of arms. Constant drill is a means to an end, but the hard, harsh words and stern tones of the drill sergeant, are to the end aimed at about as necessary as the succession of day to night. The end is accomplished better without such exhibitions of depravity.—A school is an intellectual drill room in which the youthful mind is daily drilled on the various subjects which contribute to its enlargement and strength. Mental discipline is the end aimed at, school exercise is the means to that end.

School drill ought not to be, and assuredly is not, a teasing, wearying, dull repetition of the same thing. It is not that the child must have each day, and many times a day, the monotonous tones of the same voice uttering the same word. Such not only wearies, but disgusts. Yet it is undeniable, that junior pupils especially, should review again and again, should recite rules and forms, and constantly go back to first principles till rudiments are so firmly fixed, that to forget, becomes an impossibility. When reviewing schools, and in advanced classics, it is painful to witness deficiency in first principles. Too much time