

wholesome, methodical discipline which should be the aim of all true education to impart. Notoriously, moreover, the system fails to do justice to the pupils who may be the most deserving of commendation, and whose training, if it is possible to get it from a master who is ever looking at the highest numerical results of his forcing system, is likely to be more thorough if not so showy. That the system should also lead to the practice of those disreputable artifices commented upon elsewhere in the present number, is not the least indictment against it. Yet objectionable and mischievous as is the "cramming system for these periodical examinations, and keenly alive to its evils as are most of the profession, we nevertheless go on from year to year doing incalculable mischief to the immature minds of the pupils who are passed through the "grind," and seemingly indifferent to the educational failures that must result from this hot-house forcing. Tests of progress, of course, we must have, but surely some plan can be devised whereby the whole apparatus of education shall not be diverted to the purpose of working up a pupil to pass an examination. The stimulus of emulation, no doubt, is good, but when it goes beyond this to appeal to the harsh combative instincts of youth, and degrades education to the arts of the race-course, it is time to pause and reflect upon what we are about. If the competitive element must be a factor in the schools, surely it is possible to minimize the evils that wait upon its introduction, and to endeavour to make the examinations in some practicable way subsidiary to education.

CRITICISM, COMPETENT AND PERFUNCTORY.

"If the critics treat your first book ill," Carlyle once remarked to a young author, "write the second better,—so much better as to shame them." This is the counsel manifestly of wisdom, and, it is at once soothing and bracing. The lesson may not be much needed thus far in the history of Canadian literature; but it applies to literary

workmanship of any kind, as much as it does to ambitious book-making. The writer of a magazine article may profit by the philosophic utterance, and even the compiler of a city directory may gain something by heeding the counsel. But the trouble authors heretofore have had, and even still have, in Canada, has arisen from the absence, and not from the rigour, of literary criticism. Of competent criticism, indeed, if we except that that has in the past ten years appeared in the *Canadian Monthly*, we may say that there has been little or none. Enterprising as are our newspapers, none of them have on their staff a specially-retained literary critic. Occasionally a creditable bit of criticism appears in their columns, exhibiting acquaintance with the functions of a critic, and indicating the capacity to fulfil the duties of one. Ordinarily, however, we have little from the newspaper press beyond the conventional and most perfunctory "book-notice." For years back a leading Toronto journal has scarcely risen to the intellectual effort of even the "book-notice,"—its columns enshrining specimens so unique in the department of literary reviewing as to lead one to question whether there was sufficient brain power in its management that would not exhaust itself by penning down "this is a book."

In the pages of this magazine from its inception, we have attempted to give some character to the reviewing of books suited to the wants of the professional readers whom we address. Our enterprise in this direction, and the pains we have taken with the task we set before us, we are glad to say, have been widely and amply appreciated—one competent critic referring in commendation of our work to "the original articles on new books," and "the able and scholarly reviews" appearing in our pages as "a marked feature" of the *MONTHLY*. Leading off in a new departure of this kind, and setting a high standard of critical appraisal before us, it was obviously an unpleasant duty to ply the critic's art in a department of literature that had not hitherto stood very high, and seldom had the advan-