

DR. A. CRESPI, in an article in *The National Review*, expresses his conviction that a change of "execrable" to fairish cooking in the homes of the poor, would do more than any other change that can be mentioned, to improve the condition of the humbler classes. Few will doubt the correctness of the opinion, but still fewer will take the trouble to note the practical moral it points. What a social revolution would be wrought in a few years if every girl in the public schools were to be taught to cook and sew. Why not?

MANY of our subscribers will read, we have no doubt, with interest and profit the special article in this number. The subject, a critical examination of one of the text-books used in the High Schools, is a good one, and its treatment by Mr. Tytler shows that it has fallen into competent hands. The day is, happily, past, when the teacher was a mere "hearer of lessons," and pinned his faith unquestioningly to every opinion and statement of the text-book. Not one of the least advantages resulting from the teacher's ability to criticise the text-book put into his hands, and to exercise an independent judgment with regard to the value of its methods, is that it is no longer so vitally important that the book should be the very best possible, of its kind, though it is, of course, still very important that it should be the best procurable.

THE faith of a large class of Englishmen in the virtues of the rod as a means of education and morality is touching. Even lords and ladies have been writing to the *Times* and other papers advocating, as the *Church Times* puts it, "a return to the healthy application of the rod, which was more in fashion before the days of compulsory education than it has been since, and, moreover, advising a judicious measure of corporal punishment for girls as well as boys." A favorite argument with most of those who plead for a freer use of the rod in schools is that many of the children are accustomed to brutal beatings at home. It surely does not require a very profound philosophy to see that this fact, and its results as seen in the characters of the children, afford one of the strongest arguments in favor of the use of more merciful and enlightened methods in the schools. Very often the poor wretch whose sensibilities and affections have been blunted by abuse and cruelty is the very one who can be most powerfully wrought upon by the loving justice and gentleness which he has never before known. "There is," says the *Church Times*, too much animalism in modern life, and the flesh must be tamed while it is young." This prescription, by a religious paper, of flogging as a means of spiritual grace, is a phenomenon in logic.

WE call attention to the article by Mr. G. W. Johnson, in our Method's Department, on "How to Teach Spelling." We like Mr. Johnson's way of reducing scientific principles to practical methods. We need hardly add that,

in condemning the use of spelling books, we had no intention of denying the necessity of teaching spelling, and, in order to do so, of classifying difficulties, and deducing laws or rules for overcoming them, so far as the stupendously irregular orthography of our language makes it possible to do so to any good purpose. We had rather in mind the old-fashioned and, we should hope, obsolete practice of requiring children to memorize long columns of words, unconnected by any law of mental association, and, in very many cases unfamiliar both in the vocabulary and in the range of thought of school children. Without wishing to take exception in any respect to Mr. Johnson's excellent remarks, we may observe that the statement that "dictation is *only* spelling practice," seems to us to require modifying or supplementing. To our mind the educational principle underlying this exercise is that spelling belongs to written, not spoken, language, and is, therefore, to be learned by the eye rather than by the ear. We have often been tempted to regard the difficulty some children have in learning to spell almost as much a visual as a mental defect. When once the eye has been trained to note distinctly the forms of words, when reading or writing, the main difficulty will have been overcome. The chief use of dictation exercises is to train the eye to this nicety of perception.

ONE practical question broached in Mr. Tytler's essay, is of great practical importance, and as we cannot have the benefit of the opinions which Mr. Tytler may have elicited from the members of the Association he was addressing, we venture to suggest that other teachers might do good service by giving our readers the benefit of their experience, and especially of any method they may have found useful, in obviating the difficulty. We refer to the remark that if exercises in English composition are to be in the highest degree effectual, there must be minute, individual criticism. The difficulty in question arises from the practical impossibility of making such criticism, when the classes are large. Some may, perhaps, doubt the necessity or even the utility of making such criticism minute. Many teachers, in fact, argue, not without force, that minute criticism should be avoided in any but the last and highest stages, as tending to confuse and discourage rather than stimulate the student. Mr. Tytler is undoubtedly right in intimating that the main aim should be to induce a habit of self-criticism. This is, in our opinion, a truth of the highest importance, and we believe that in skilful hands a criticism before the whole class, participated in, to some extent, by members of the class, of a few compositions, chosen either at random, or on some useful principle, from the whole mass, may be made to serve, if not the very highest, yet a most excellent purpose. All practical teachers will, we believe, be agreed, Mr. Bain to the contrary notwithstanding, that constant essay-writing by the student is not only useful but indispensable.

Educational Thought.

THE TEACHER'S TASK.

YES, sculptor, touch the clay with skill;
Let lines of beauty curve and flow,
And shape the marble to thy will,
While soft-winged fancies come and go—
Till the stone, vanquished, yield the strife,
And some fair form awake to life,
Obedient to thy beckoning hand—
And thy name ring through all the land!

And painter, wield the brush with care;
Give firm, true touches, one by one,
Toil patiently on, nor know despair;
Open thy whole soul to the sun,
And give of love's serene repose,
Till the dull canvas gleams and glows
With truth and wealth of sentiment,
And thine own heart shall be content!

But, teacher, mould the tender mind
With daintier skill, with dearer art,
All cunning of the books combined
With wider wisdom of the heart—
The subtle spell of eyes and voice—
Till the roused faculties rejoice,
And the young powers bloom forth and bless
The world and thine own consciousness!

—The American.

"I SEE no objection, however, to light reading, desultory reading, the reading of newspapers, or the reading of fiction, if you take enough ballast with it, so that these light kites, as the sailors call them, may not carry your ship over in some sudden gale. The principle of sound habits of reading, if reduced to a precise rule, comes out thus: That for each hour of light reading, of what we read for amusement, we ought to take another hour of reading for instruction."—Hale.

THE boy who is not plastic, imitative, easily managed, who is very apt to be "trying," may be, and probably is, the very one who will develop, if rightly guided, the most individual power, and do himself and his teachers most credit by rendering useful service in the great field of active life. Have patience with him, O much-tried teachers, and remember that in school, as in most of the relations of life, there are usually short-comings on both sides, and that all your words and deeds are exposed to the keen scrutiny of your boy critics.—Mrs. Goodale, in *Am. Teacher*.

EMULATION has been termed a spur to virtue, and assumes to be a spur of gold. But it is a spur composed of baser materials, and if tried in the furnace, will be found to want that *fixedness* which is the characteristic of gold. He that pursues virtue, only to surpass others, is not far from wishing others less forward than himself; and he that rejoices too much at his own perfections will be too little grieved at the defects of other men. We might also insist upon this, that true virtue, though the most humble of all things, is the most progressive; it must persevere to the end. But, as Alexander scorned the Olympic games, because there were no kings to contend with, so he that starts only to outstrip others will suspend his exertions when that is attained; and self-love will, in many cases, incline him to stoop for the prize, even before he has obtained the victory.—Lacon.

THE ancient Israelites seem to have had an exalted notion of the teacher's office. Children were commanded in the Talmud to esteem their teachers above their fathers. The standard of teachers' qualifications was also very high. Among the qualities recommended were experience, mildness, patience, and unselfishness. One of the old Rabbins expresses his estimate of the value of maturity and experience, in these words: "He who learns of a young master is like one who eats green grapes, and drinks wine fresh from the press; but he who has a master of mature years is like a man who eats ripe and delicious grapes, and drinks old wine." Unfortunately, it sometimes happens that the pupil of an old master is like one that eats dried grapes which have lost their juiciness and sweetness, and drinks wine that has turned sour.—Ohio Ed. Monthly.