

out is not fault-finding but helpful criticism. Now three serious defects seem to us allied in this dangerous way to the excellent modern methods of teaching. They are not everywhere present, nor are they necessary results of current views and practices, but they are natural results, and not uncommon. In the first place, the modern teacher seeks to adapt the work closely in matter and method to the nature of the pupil; but the defect of adaptation is manifestly weakness. We may adapt too closely. John Stuart Mill says, "The pupil of whom nothing is required which he cannot do never does all that he can." Strength is obtainable by exertion, by attempting difficulties. This false tone in our primary work has begun to be generally apparent. We are babying the children. We have over-elaborated their work in number, in language, and in reading, and adapted it so delicately that there is nothing tonic in it. As a matter of fact, it is always better to work a little above the pupil's capacity than a little below it—provided we do not press this to the point of producing discouragement. Adaptation is admirable—but its defect is weakness, and against weak work, amiable trifling, the modern teacher needs to guard. Another excellent purpose is to make work pleasant and attractive. We certainly would not have this abandoned, although we do think it necessary for pupils to learn to do what is not agreeable. Self-indulgence is evidently the defect which our amiable purpose is liable to beget. The old discipline did not tend to this. Here was the task—it was called by no alluring name; it was a duty, and duty need not be attractive; the fruits of neglect were, however, very bitter. The discipline produced earnest, self-denying, devoted men. In the effort to make work pleasant and to avoid harshness there is need to guard

against the growth of an easy-going, self-indulgent spirit. If we abandon the plan of overcoming this by a stern and hard discipline, there is certainly all the more call for an intelligent culture of a self-denying and dutiful application. Again, in the reaction against definitions, verbal memorizing, and hard and fast forms of statement, there is constant danger that we shall leave most things in the mind loose and vague, and thus substitute a mental laxness for the narrow firmness of the old mental training. An exact and retentive memory is not a curse: it is one of the best results of wise training. To secure this it is not necessary to return to mere rote learning; but some learning by heart is wise and necessary. Even things not understood, when thus learned, may, as Mr. Mill tells us was the case with him, "serve as a nucleus for observations and reflections to crystallize upon." But laxness is manifestly the defect of our developing methods, laxness of memory and, in general, a low mental tension. We work to develop the understanding, and are mortified to find that our pupils understand and forget. There are then these three defects of our qualities—weakness, a self-indulgent spirit and laxness, against which we need to guard carefully.

RUSSIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.—The Russian Government has practically determined to connect St. Petersburg with the Pacific by rail. When completed this line will form the shortest, straightest and quickest highway from Europe to the eastern shores of Asia, and will complete the "iron band" with which man has girdled the earth. It is proposed that the Pacific Terminus shall be at Vladivostock in Siberia, near Peter the Great Bay.

The first section of the line is to be constructed in Central Siberia,