

labors for the one to the neglect of the other. In some of our schools a rule obtains that each class shall cover a prescribed amount of work, familiarize themselves with a specified number of pages in the different text-books, in a given time. If the different members of the class pass a creditable examination at the end of a specified time, well and good; they pass. But if one poor unfortunate fails to make the required per cent., he does not pass. Sometimes he ought not. But every observing teacher of experience well knows that scholars of worth, scholars the peers of the best in the class, in all that goes to make up honest worth, sometimes fall below the established standard, and are not allowed to pass to the next higher grade. Trivial technicalities sometimes eclipse real worth.

"In one of the foremost schools in the State, a young man was defrauded of his rank in the class merely because he spelled one little word wrongly. He had spelled it correctly a score of times in the same paper. The result was he ranked second to an inferior classmate in the published reports. The teacher mentally rebelled, but such a course was demanded by the methods then in use.

"In this way an injustice to real merit is often done. What teacher does not know the standing of the scholar as well before examination as after? If a class in any grade, through the carelessness of the teacher in charge, accomplish the required work in less than the allotted time, what then? It is charged that sometimes such a class has been held at the specified limits for weeks and not allowed to advance in their work. The rules demanded it. Rules must be kept inviolate even if the scholar suffer! He is made for the school, and not the school for him! The teacher, in such a case, is supposed to have done her work in an imperfect manner, and is to blame. If the class fail to do the specified work, then there is again something wrong with the teacher of the class. She must be held responsible. What if she plead earnest effort and unsparring pains, or a wide difference in the ability of the classes? There is a failure, and she being human has erred! The rule cannot be in error, for that is not human, not humane, for that matter. Teacher and class may be blamed, may suffer; but 'our methods' must be carried out without 'variation or shadow of turning.' What is the use of having rules unless they be lived up to? Did it never occur to such a teacher that a little elasticity in rules will not vitiate their strength?

"Every well-prepared programme divides school time into recitation and study hours. This is all well. But is it just the right thing to say that every scholar in such class shall devote the time allotted to any one study to that alone, and always, and not be allowed to leave it, when learned, for another? If one brighter than others in the class needs less time for a certain lesson, but more for another in which he finds greater difficulty, is it not an injustice to him to be held to the strict letter of the law? And yet such things do happen.

"In moving classes much needless circumlocution is employed. Of course every class must be moved at all times and under all circumstances by the same signals and in the same exact order! Uniformity is order always! Our worthy ex-State Superintendent, Prof. Von Coelln, gives a good illustration. He relates that in one school which he visited, nine taps of the bell brought the class promptly and orderly to the recitation seat, and as many more returned it in safety and in an orderly manner to its seat. Nine signals seem rather superabundant to move any class; but how all-sufficient they seem when, as in the case cited, the class consists of only one young man. Doubtless the teacher acted very conscientiously in the matter; but her conscientiousness did not go far in developing the individuality or the independence of the scholar, and possibly developed a feeling of contempt on the part of the young man for rules and regulations in general.

"But little more wisdom was shown when another teacher suspended recitations an hour while a boy went for her call-bell carelessly left at home. A bell had always been used to move classes, and strict method required it then.

"Over-methodizing may defraud the scholar out of his rights, out of that which was promised him by his teacher. Fifteen-minute recesses are very often laid down on our programmes, in which time the scholar is promised a release from the exactions of the school-room. He understands that this time is his, to be used in any proper manner that he may choose. And yet he is not unfrequently required to surrender one-half of it for forming into lines, marching and counter marching, or worse yet, in waiting.

"Several years ago the writer saw the scholars of two rooms kept in line several minutes, one bleak, wintry day, while the teacher of one room brought a dish of water and one small boy near the head

of the line washed and dried his hands and received his reprimand. The other line could not be allowed to pass through its separate door till the line in which was the boy of the dirty hands had entered. The usual methods must be carried out to the letter. Exposure of the child's health, or the deprivation of his promised rights, are of minor importance! What right had that teacher to punish the whole school—yes, two schools—for the fault or carelessness of one boy? Why did she not draw him out of the line and let the others pass in? Doubtless because there was no precedent for it. 'Ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin and neglect the weightier things of the law,' is as true here and now as when proclaimed by the Great Teacher nineteen centuries ago.

"Treat all your scholars alike, show no partiality, is an excellent rule. In order to carry out this law, a sort of 'rules' is laid down covering as many possible cases as the fertile mind of the teacher can suggest, and each rule has its exact and specific penalty attached. Happy in the consciousness that the best methods have been adopted, and that all may now be treated impartially, the work goes on. Two scholars have broken the same rule—one a timid little girl, as delicate and frail as she is conscientious and obedient, carefully nurtured by loving parents, and a stranger to the penal code; the other, the proverbial 'worst boy in the school,' to whom punishment is a pastime. Ten minutes on the floor, exposed to the gaze of the school, is agony to the one and a recreation to the other. And yet some teachers seem to think that in thus carrying out the letter of the law they are guilty of no crime! Time may not reveal the fact to their sluggish minds, but eternity will. A little less method and more common sense would have resulted in less cruelty to the one and a better correction to the other.

"A cast-iron rule is the wisdom of fools,' is a proverb that applies to school economy no less than to political, and the teacher that is not able to adjust methods to particular cases has yet something to learn in theory and practice. Too much method is bad enough in the hands of an otherwise prudent teacher, but when applied by ignorance certainly is not much improved.

That exactness which takes all responsibility from the scholar and yet holds him responsible for every little irregularity, is not calculated to bring about the best results. Tell the scholar what you require of him, and point out to him the precise manner in which everything must be done; omit not the slightest detail; train him day by day to act out your mind in your manner, and, pray tell, what is there left of him? It is all of you. No child of spirit or enterprise will willingly submit, and he ought not. His obedience will be yielded under protest, and it should be. None but slaves have long submitted. Manhood rebels against such tyranny. To illustrate: In one of our city schools, it is said, is a rule that no child, in passing up or down stairs, shall break the line, or the step, or speak, or whisper, or look backward, or sideways, or put a hand on the hand-rails, &c., &c. If any one of these multitudinous parts of the rule is broken, the 'culprit' is recalled to his room and set to work at some task, writing a certain number of words on the blackboard, or studying so many minutes, or some other similar punishment. What is study worth to him under such circumstances? And is there any love of study awakened in the mind of the scholar? Will he not soon learn to associate books and study with punishment? And what but fear is the restraining force? Has his honor or love of right, for the sake of it, been developed?

"Several years ago I saw, while visiting Massachusetts State Prison, a practice somewhat similar, though less exacting in some things. Hardened criminals were being dealt with there. Fear was the inciting cause to obedience, and continual punishment the end to be attained. Shall we make our schools institutions of like character?

"The boy is the man in embryo. He is a distinct individual now as well as then, possessed of attributes and native qualities peculiar to himself, either as boy or man. To so develop the better qualities, and so increase their growth that they will overtop the worse ones, will generally more successfully develop the better man. Being peculiarly sensitive, he is easily influenced by whatever transpires around him; being full of curiosity he sees everything, estimates each and all, and if of value seeks to make it his own, and if thought worthless he throws it aside. No eye is keener than his to discern the ludicrous or ridiculous; and while at times he may show that he is well stocked with both, he will not willingly yield his consent to have them practised on him by others. He often chafes under reasonable restraints, but his better judgment urges him to submit; but when his judgment condemns them, the only restraining force left him is either love of reward or praise, or fear