

SCHOOLMASTERS AND THEIR OFFICE.

BY A. T. S.

WHO shall assign a date to the first ridicule of the schoolmaster and the tutor? Comic writers have made him one of their favourite butts, and even grave writers have betrayed him. Some have mocked him in his chair of authority, and some, like Pope and Churchill, have shot at him flying. At home with his pupils, or travelling with them, he has never been safe. With his ferule, he has been a monster; without it, an impostor, affecting a home and family tenderness which he cannot be expected to feel in reality. Sidney, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Bishop Corbet, and we know not how many more of our early writers, who could command the laugh of the town, have all had their fling at him; indeed, of such writers, we may ask, who has ever said a solitary word in his favour? But his discredit is older, far older, than this. Juvenal in Rome laments over the want of appreciation, and the ill-paid services, not of the sham school speculator, but of the really doctus Palæmon, who might well have shed tears, not, as Isocrates did, at having to accept a fee, but at having to accept so very small a one. We could copy many an ugly picture. St. Augustine calls the school system of his day "magna tyrannis et grave malum;" and the learned Erasmus, in his *Encomium of Folly*, describes the master as "taking a great pride and delight in frowning and looking big upon the trembling urchins; in boxing, slashing, and striking with the ferule:" and this last, near about the day of Grocyn, Linacer, Ascham, and Dean Colet, when, if ever, a short gleam of honour

shone upon the profession of the schoolmaster. In vain, on the other hand, have some of our best heads in England striven to come to the rescue, and tried to prove that the profession should be one of honour, and not of obloquy. In no country, not even in France, have the laughers had so much of their own way, and for so long a time, as in England. It is one of our longest, if not our final test; and, with a view to give it fair opportunity, every public question is put in every possible light, and made to throw itself into every conceivable attitude. It may be almost asserted that nothing whatever has been established in England that has not passed triumphantly through this ordeal, which our national character makes the severest of all. The school and schoolmaster have had their full share. Lord Bacon, in his *Advancement*, vindicates the instruction and the instructors of youth from contempt, and loudly condemns "the disesteeming of those employments wherein youth is conversant, and which are conversant about youth;" and he set his seal to the truth of his words in the letters to Secretary Conway, written many years afterwards, in which he requests for himself the appointment to the provostship of Eton. Bacon missed it; but the man who held it—Wotton—thought it no disgrace to have changed the duties of a statesman and an ambassador for those of a pedagogue, which he esteems as a high and public office. These are his words at the opening of his survey of education: "If any should think education, because it is conversant about children,