

liberty and enlightened instruction, freely given to efficient teachers and principals, would soon solve these vexed questions.

We doubt very much, however, if with all our teachers competent, the intrepid Colonel could put an end to the criticism that sees no flaw, for, when we hear Dr. Rice reporting in this wise of the Boston Schools, we may well expect that there will not be wanting the critic with the audacity to declare the laws of nature a little 'off the plumb.' "If there be a city" says the flying squadron of the *Forum* "where we have every right to expect to find a uniformly high degree of excellence in the schools, and where poor schools are less pardonable than in other cities, that city is Boston. For the conditions under which its schools labor are, and have been for a comparatively long period, in a measure ideal. First, the school system is not a machine, both principals and teachers being allowed enough liberty to develop their powers. Secondly, the appointment of teachers and principals is controlled, largely at least, by merit and not by "pulls." In the selection of principals special care is exercised. As to the teachers, although the graduates of the Boston Normal School appear, other things being equal, to have the preference, others are preferred if they are found better qualified than the home candidates. To a certain extent, the principals are permitted to select their own teachers, and teachers are not usually forced upon principals as in many other cities. Thirdly, no teacher receives a permanent appointment until she has taught in the public schools of Boston for four years. Until that period has elapsed she is reappointed annually. Further, if, after receiving a permanent appointment, she proves herself positively incompetent, no amount of "pull" can keep her in her place. Fourthly, Boston, with its twelve hundred teachers, has now, and has had for some fifteen years a city superintendent and six assistant superintendents. Lastly, the cost of instruction *per capita* is exceptionally high.

In view of their superior advantages, the Boston schools, generally speaking, fall far short of what they ought to be. Their particular weakness lies in the primary grades, the grammar schools being upon a much higher level. Indeed, taken all in all, so marked is the difference between the primary and the grammar schools that they scarcely appear to belong to the same system and to be in charge of the same superintendents and principals. But even the grammar schools are very uneven, the unevenness being marked, not only between the teaching found in different schools, but also between that