

SCHOOL CRITICISM.

We often hear the sad-hearted teacher say, "I would dearly love to teach, did not the children so sorely try me. But I have labored and studied and struggled to improve their ways, only still to see them full of faults." My purpose is to say to my fellow-teachers that the "faults" are exactly what you want. Your opportunity subsists in your children's foibles and imperfections. If pupils had none of these, you could have no field of labor. You are in the school-room for the purpose of dealing with frailties; and the whole of your study, professionally considered, is with the view of treating successfully such moral and intellectual deformities as possess the children.

Instead, then, of pining under the unpromising prospect of the teacher's lot, enter as bravely into the sternest phases of your duty as though, in the soldiers' columns, you were facing shot and saber. You are thus, by your circumstances, in the highest and best sense of the word a critic. Your field is your glory. You have the best possible opportunity to see the children's errors and to study for their correction.

But criticism is more than fault-finding. The excellent critic is the skillful analyzer, who can discern the differences between faults and graces, and who can so display the same as to make others see them. There is a lesson in every affair of the school, and the master critic is he who is able to find it.

There are two methods in current use, whose benefits are small unless the two are combined. There are hobbyists on both sides, who are effective inversely as they indulge their notions. The one method is to do all the criticizing yourself, in order that it may be well done: the other is to delegate it all to their pupils, in order to stimulate their minds as well as to sharpen their observation. These reasons are both excellent, and since they support opposite positions, each should be received with allowance for the other. By carefully observing the workings of either plan alone, serious objections will suggest themselves.

1. The work should be well done; so the teacher should be responsible for every correction.

2. The class should be intent upon the exercise; so everyone should have part in the discussion of a fault.

But when the patient teacher, unwilling to risk his cause with another, faithfully observes each error and administers its treatment, he takes upon himself too much work. Jethro said to his son-in-law, Moses, "The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and the people that is with thee; for this thing is too heavy for thee." Moses had simply been sitting on a judgment seat from morning to evening, trying to judge the people. He had been weighing matters which could have been determined by other men. Jethro advised him to establish ordinances (by-laws), and appoint men for their administration, reserving to himself only the "great matters." There is a world of wisdom in this. It is the foundation principle of political economy.

One of the rarest attainments in the teacher's scope is the art of economizing time and force. You cannot afford to lose a moment of the one or an ounce of the other. In the six hours of a school day you must attend to the several branches or be untrue to your duty. Many of these must be so sub-divided that in the possible classification you will fall short of time. So by doing all there is to do in the field of criticism, you consume the most precious boon. And the labor of attending to the minutest details of the school machinery is that of an intellectual Hercules. "Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people."

But there is danger, on the other hand, in the second method. Teachers who ignore the children's faults, accepting such construction as other children will put upon them, take on too little work. The young critic will often be sharp and impress his classmate, when he himself is wrong. Or, what is worse, he may make no impression at all. Little feuds may be nurtured in this way, classmates seeking this as the best opportunity for venting malicious feeling.

The remedy for all these tendencies is in the teacher's watch-care. He is a critic-in-chief whose decision must be final. It is his place to see that the children's criticisms