

unpretentious instrument has risen to an important position in the world of science, and has become a most use-

ful aid in extending the bounds of knowledge.

OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM.

BY AGRICOLA.

IT is surprising how much ingenuity has been expended in attempts to solve the problem: How are we to render our schools really efficient? It is admitted that individual schools are met with which rise to the necessary degree of efficiency, or come very near it, but the problem, of course, cannot be considered solved until it has become possible to decide beforehand whether a school will be successful or not. In details we have seen so many experiments tried, skilful and otherwise, that we are almost led to believe that the object is not to discover the best solution, but to find one which will fill the place, in some degree, of the true one. Have we come so far on the way of our vaunted progress, and do we still find that the science of Education—perhaps the most important of all—stands still, and seemingly as little advanced as the science of Archæology. But there is no lack of theorists who give much time and ability to the question. Ah! if these theorists could only be induced to abandon their ballooning and keep their feet well on the firm ground, what results we might expect! Let them but recognize that, after all, the whole matter is like the question of making the best boots. How are these to be made? "Oh," says one, "employ good foremen, who will keep a sharp look out after the manner in which the work is done." So the schools have Inspectors. But here is our difficulty. An inspector must

know how to inspect. Now, *inspecting* means *looking into*, and a magpie may "look into" a marrow-bone and be quite at a loss to know what to do next. So inspectors sometimes look into a class-room, and perhaps find it empty of marrow; and sometimes they cannot see what marrow there is certainly in it. To find marrow metaphorically, requires a trained metaphorical eyesight, and it is perhaps a pity to take a successful teacher and make an inspector of him; but if we are to have inspectors, and they are to be of any use, they must be chosen from amongst the list of "successful teachers." An inspector should be a very "round" man, not eager to display his angles and crotchets before teacher and class, exciting perhaps the indignation or contempt of the one, and puzzling the other, and then basing his report upon the confusion which he has himself introduced into, it may be, a well ordered school-room. "Oh!" says another, "inspectors are very good, but they are not enough; we must have searching examinations and plenty of them." In the short space of a twelvemonth, nay, of less than ten months, what an amount of work must be gone over! Yes, gone *over*, not *through*. There is now a goad for indolent scholars; they may be plucked! What does "plucking" mean? Is there disgrace attending it? Whatever it really signifies, it must be something unpleasant. A sensitive child would