

reckon accurately, they are not badly equipped for the struggle. It is, therefore, of the first importance that children should be well grounded in the elementary branches, but this is next to impossible when their minds are divided among a multitude of topics, the meaning and intent of which older heads find it difficult to understand. Take the young swimmer beyond his depth, and he no longer strikes out in self-reliance, but clings to the nearest floating object and drifts helplessly enough. In like manner, put the child, however bright by nature, into studies too deep for his age, and, as the safest resource, his mind lays hold of the mere words which float in the memory, and gradually settles lower and lower. The provincial examiner was astonished and grieved to find at the last examination so many candidates, thoroughly drilled according to law, answering in the exact words of the text and apparently altogether ignorant of the subject. It is a great wonder that he did not at once divine the cause of this detestable species of word-mongery, for which the students are not wholly to blame. Henceforth, when he comes seeking fruit under a system of such rank growth, he must be prepared to find nothing but leaves. The syllabus bears the same relation to solid learning that the catechism does to true piety.

I am by no means indifferent to the value of a liberal education. The higher studies have their use and their place. But for the junior classes they are no more to be compared, in point of importance, with the ordinary branches than the luxuries of life are to be compared with its necessities; and it would surely be ruinous economy to indulge to an equal extent in both where the means at command would not secure a sufficient supply of the latter. In order to see how provision is made for mental nourishment

in the schools, we have only to glance at the bill of fare placed before the sixth grade for instance, comprising, it may be, boys and girls from eight to twelve years of age. Here it is: 1. reading; 2. spelling and dictation; 3. punctuation; 4. composition,—essays, letters and descriptive sketches; 5. grammar—parsing and analysis; 6. writing; 7. drawing; 8. geography—book and map exercises; 9. arithmetic; 10. botany—a little; 11. natural phenomena—a few; 12. mineralogy; 13. hygiene; 14. music—tonic sol-fa! Some of the above, it is true, are not entered as separate studies, but that only adds to the confusion. Besides, there are a few extras easily bringing the number up to twenty; while for the eighth grade the branches in all count up twenty-two, including prosody and a dash at rhetoric and chemistry. It is clear that the juvenile intellect, revelling in all these, is living far beyond its means, and that it must become bankrupt shortly after setting up on its own account. I heartily wish the gentlemen, who drew up this enormous time table, could sometimes go with me and hear the testimony of candid and naturally capable young fellows, lately from the upper forms in country sections and now fishing farming, lumbering, etc., working at the forge or in factories—hear them tell, I say, what time they wasted over useless subjects they did not understand and could not remember, to the detriment of real progress—then there would be no need, I think, of a stronger protest.

The last number of the *Journal of Education* does not hold out much hope of reform. On the contrary, it particularly insists on the tonic sol-fa (for which if the certified teacher is not qualified, by nature, he must have a substitute), and repeatedly admonishes teachers not to neglect it under pain of having their government grants cut off. This implies a suspicion that the measure would be generally dis-