

COMMON SCHOOL STUDIES.

From the New York Teacher.

There is no trait in the character of the American people more inordinate than ambition. It enters every department of our industrial and social life, and distinctions of caste and race melt away before it. It seems innate; and from the cradle the child dreams golden dreams of future eminence and success. It lies at the foundation of much of our prosperity, and, properly directed, it may, without impropriety, be classed among the virtues, because of giving tone and character to the most praiseworthy of human endeavors. But when it seeks a short road to success, at the expense of that proper development of manhood, which alone can produce symmetry and strength of character, its influence becomes mischievous, and every agency tending to excite it, becomes dangerous. In these late days, this ambition especially vaunts itself in demanding that the "higher branches" shall be taught in our common schools; and not unfrequently, they who should ward off the approaches of this dangerous heresy become its abettors—the teachers themselves. If the purpose of primary education is to store the mind with the elemental facts of science, then surely it needs no argument to prove that not only the different branches should be taken up in the order in which the young mind is able to grasp them, but in many of them nothing but the elementary principles can be well taught, till maturity of judgment, and elasticity of mind has prepared a fitting receptacle. If, on the hand, which we shall regard as the better statement, the chief object of education is mental development tending to mental independence and mental power, then surely there must be an order of study, in which of first importance is that thoroughness in each subject undertaken which will stand forever in the way of cramming the ologies down the throats of children, fresh from the nursery.

Do we want acuteness in analysis?—What student has so mastered the processes of Mental Arithmetic, that he no longer needs the advantages it affords. Are our pupils to be prepared for the active business of life? The incidents passing every day before our eyes afford food for the liveliest imagination, and the exercise of the ripest judgment. Does Natural Philosophy clamor for a hearing? Many a pupil whose rote knowledge of the book was faultless, had not the remotest idea that the laws he enunciated so glibly were

ever developing themselves before his eyes, and that grander demonstrations were ready made, as the curtain of the morning drawn up ushered in each new born day, than ever the expertest teacher exhibited in the class room. And Chemistry, one of the most intricate and most subtle of the sciences, can be imprisoned within the crucible in no laboratory, or pent up in no glass retort, but has its grandest development in the myriad forms of active life, and in the changing phases of nature; in the sunbeams tinting the hill tops with crimson and gold, and pouring a flood of life and light upon the world; in the air we breathe, the food we eat, the plant that drinks in its sustenance from the circumambient air, and grows and ripens and dies again in the universal round of the changing seasons. The useful arts have their trophies in every dwelling, and have modified every phase of life. What we most need in elementary instruction is to awaken the child's faculties, especially of perception, memory and judgment, and so prepare his mind to take cognizance of the myriad facts and laws which await his inquiry, and will unfold themselves to his growing consciousness in ever new and ever wonderful harmony and beauty.

A variety of studies will give that grateful change which will invest each with interest; but too many will only confuse and bewilder. Two, or at most, three regular studies, other than the general exercises of the school, are enough for any pupil; and a single lesson, a single principle well mastered will not only open the way for what is to come, but every such achievement gives strength and vigor to the intellect, and engenders a habit of decision and earnestness, without which little valuable can be achieved.

For the attainment of physical vigor, we would not attempt at first effort to rival Sampson, but by doing what we can, use it as the means to give strength and suppleness, gradually increasing the task with our growing strength. So, he that would develop the intellect of the child must assign such tasks as that he shall be made strong by their perfect mastery, and take up each succeeding one with new vigor. The old gymnast carried an ox by commencing when it was a calf and continuing the task day by day.

So let algebra and logic, and metaphysics and political economy wait on arithmetic and reading and spelling, and the study of objects and familiar acquaintance with common things—their nature, uses, etc., and we shall then have knowledge, judgment, skill and a symmetrically developed child-mind, rather than the forced, unnatural and unreal pretensions of a sage's head on an infant's shoulders.

SUGGESTION TO YOUNG MEN.

In the course of my travels, I have seen many a promising and fine young man gradually led to dissipation, gambling, and ruin, merely by the want of means to make a solitary evening pass pleasantly. I earnestly advise any youth who quits that abode of purity, peace and delight, his paternal home, to acquire a taste for reading and writing. At every place where he may reside long, let him study to make his apartments as attractive and comfortable as possible, for he will find a little extraordinary expense, so bestowed at the beginning, to be economy at the end; let him read the books in the language of the place in which he lives, and, above all, let him never retire without writing at least a page of original comments on what he has seen, read and heard in the day. This habit will teach him to observe and discriminate, for a man ceases to read with a desultory and wandering mind, which is utter waste of time, when he knows that an account of the information which he has gained must be written at night.—*Clifton's Sketches on Biography.*

A COMPLIMENT TO COLLEGE AVENUE.

A lovely little girl of three years, went out from the close brick walls of her boarding house home in the city a few days since, with her mother and a party of friends to walk in the beautiful public grounds known as College Avenue. Those who have been so happy as to visit them know them to be delightful beyond description. After entering the gates *Lila* let go her mother's hand and bounding forward a few steps, stopped and poised lightly on her toes, with outstretched hands and rapt expression, gazed up and around, for a moment, then running back exclaimed "Mama! Mama! this must be the place where God lives." T. A. D.

A CHEAP AND GOOD BAROMETER.—

A truthful and cheap *Barometer*, interesting and instructive to youth, may be made by taking a clean glass bottle, and putting in it a small quantity of finely pulverized alum. Then fill up the bottle with spirits of wine. The alum will be perfectly dissolved by the alcohol, and in clear weather the liquid will be as transparent as the purest water. On the approach of rain, or cloudy weather, the alum will be visible in a flaky spiral cloud in the centre of the fluid, reaching from the bottom to the surface. This is a cheap, simple, and beautiful barometer.—*ROBERT SHAW Shucilla N. Y., 1859.*