

## PROFESSOR MACDONALD'S PAPER.

In the December REVIEW there appeared a very able and scholarly paper read by Professor Macdonald at the recent opening of the Normal School at Truro. But the paper deals with one phase only of education—the development of intellectual power. It is unfortunately true that a very large proportion of those who have the highest reputation as teachers aim at nothing more than the training of the intellect. How far man can go in this direction, and by what means he can secure the most wonderful results may be learned from the history of the Athenians. But the same study shows how defective is such a one-sided education,—failing in the end to secure not only the result sought, but also results of much greater importance.

Although the Professor asserts that the development of intellectual power should be the chief aim of the high school course, yet we do not think that he intends to undervalue the necessity of physical training or that he ignores the paramount importance of character building, including the formation of correct habits.

He asserts that present conditions in our high schools are unfavorable to the development of scientific habits of mind or healthy bodies—the number of subjects to be studied, and the hurry to pass an examination on them results in cramming, superficiality and mental debility.

He recommends that on entering the high school the boy or girl of the average age of thirteen be requested to select a favourite subject for a major study—a subject to be studied thoroughly, systematically, deeply, down to the very roots, while all the other subjects may be passed over with minimum marks.

Until we have very much better teachers than at present, we cannot crowd into the common school course more than it already contains.

Our best pupils at the average ages of thirteen or fourteen, when leaving the common schools and entering the academies, are only just beginning to get some glimpses of the realities of the outer world. Their powers of observation have been partially educated, and they have accumulated many facts, but they do not know the meaning. Of their own power and aptitudes they have scarcely begun to think. External circumstances may have forced them to turn their attention to certain pursuits or subjects more than to others; but they are incapable of intelligent choice.

The object of the high school is to give the pupil a general and comprehensive view of the world

around him before he is subjected to the narrowing effects of some special pursuit. If he is ever to see all things in their true perspective, and form valuable, reliable judgments for his future guidance, he must in youth have a comprehensive grasp of *all the elements* of knowledge; as well as in more mature years have a deep and profound knowledge of one or a few subjects.

It is an infinite variety of healthful recreations throughout the extended period of growth that develops symmetrical physical beauty.

It is a wholesome interest in and pursuit of every kind of knowledge during the first sixteen or eighteen years of life that will lay the foundation for genuine culture in the "school of life," or in the university.

We think, then, that reserving exceptional cases, academy teachers should strongly discourage elective courses.

In corroboration of our views we might quote the opinions of the ancient philosophers, Aristotle and Quintilian. Or from later times we might cite the authority of Comenius—the first evangelist of modern pedagogy. In advocating the concurrent study of several branches, Quintilian says: "Must he learn grammar alone and then geometry, and in the meanwhile forget what he first learned! As well advise the farmer not to cultivate at the same time his fields, his vines, his olive trees and his orchards, and not to give his thought simultaneously to his meadows, his cattle, his gardens and his trees."

The most distinguished modern educationists are of opinion that the "five fundamental disciplines" should enter about equally into the curriculum of the high school and be all imperative.

Dr. Bicknell, President of the New England Association, asks whether boys and girls, in their teens, are the wisest judges as to the best studies to be pursued. "Are we to commit to the untrained and inexperienced the solution of a problem by chance, choice, or whimsical caprice, which the wisest and the best of the world have wrought out by the slow processes of educational evolution?" "We must declare that some studies do enter as constituents into a liberal education; that others are elective, and that the latter should not infringe on the former."

Special attention to "one major subject, or groups of related ones, cannot, according to the laws of growth, produce satisfactory development of so amazingly complex a being as man.

A diet composed mainly of one article is not considered so wholesome or agreeable as a mixed diet.

Dr. Harris, U. S. Commissioner of Education, Dr. E. E. White, and all other such men are earnest advocates for the prolongation of the time devoted