

In the High Schools the study of Latin and Greek is henceforth to be optional. A thorough elementary classical education is still to be provided for boys (and girls, if you please) who may propose to enter a university; but boys and girls who have no such intention, are not to be debarred from receiving a superior High School education adapted to their wants. In order to give effect to the views of the Legislature, the Council of Public Instruction has addressed itself to the task of framing two programmes for High Schools, one classical, and the other non-classical. In the non-classical course, prominence is given to various branches of science, the curriculum being, in this respect, a continuation of what was prepared for the Public Schools; and an attempt is made to exhibit, in definite outline, a scheme of advanced study in the English language. I have elsewhere stated at length, and with all the earnestness in my power, my opinion in regard to the value of the English language, as an instrument of education; and I will now merely say, that in order to vindicate for English a far higher place than it has yet received in our Provincial schools, it is not necessary to institute a comparison between it and the ancient classical languages, or the modern German and French; for it is perfectly certain that the great mass of the boys and girls in our schools must receive almost their entire culture, so far as dependent on the study of language, neither from the ancient classics, nor from French and German, but from their own language. In illustration of the fact that the study of the English language and literature may be rendered not only fascinating, but extremely useful even for the accomplishment of many of the results for which it has hitherto been the habit to look almost exclusively to Latin and Greek, let me quote a passage from a lecture of Professor Tyndall, one of the best writers, as well as ablest philosophers of the present day:—"If I except discussions on the comparative merits of Popery and Protestantism; English grammar was the most important discipline of my boyhood. The piercing through the involved and inverted sentences of 'Paradise Lost'; the linking of the verb to its often distant nominative, of the relative to its distant antecedent, of the agent to the object of the transitive verb, of the preposition to the noun or pronoun which it governed; the study of variations in mood and tense; the transformations often necessary to bring out the true grammatical structure of a sentence—all this was to my young mind a discipline of the highest value, and, indeed, a source of unflagging delight. How I rejoiced when I found a great author tripping, and was fairly able to pin him to a corner from which there was no escaping. I speak thus of English, because it was of real value to me. I do not speak of other languages, because their educational value for me was almost insensible. But," he adds—and the words merit attention, as showing how the appreciation of one means of culture does not necessarily lessen, with a broad-minded man, the appreciation of another—"knowing the value of English so well, I should be the last to deny, or even to doubt, the high discipline involved in the proper study of Latin and Greek."

The single difficulty which I foresee in the way of carrying out