

“dressing” of what were called “English subjects,” grammar, geography and history. But it has long been recognized that such a course of study, no matter how faithfully administered, might leave too many children “without any permanent interests in nature, or in human institutions and human achievements, and without much inclination to acquire such interests by further study, or power to assimilate or apply such knowledge and skill as they had gained.” Ability to read might be acquired, “but not the reading habit; the ability to spell and write words, but no power of expression with the pen; a varying ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide simple numbers, integral and fractional, but much uncertainty in all other arithmetical operations; some fragmentary book knowledge of names and places of our own country and foreign countries, and some scrappy information relating to the history of Britain and Greater Britain.” Now reading, writing and arithmetic are still recognized as necessary studies—studies which serve as the “instruments of the acquisition and expression of knowledge” But they are not enough. They do not suffice in themselves to “open the mind of the child and let the world in.” Hence the enrichment of the old curriculum by nature study, to the end that no child shall be ignorant of the processes involved in the rising and the setting of the sun; by drawing and other modes of initial instruction in the fine arts, such as clay modelling; by manual training; by every subject, in short, that is best fitted to stimulate curiosity and develop the power of observation in regard to what the child sees from day to day around and about him.

And here, of course, the danger is

that in the endeavor to secure variety and vivacity, and to avoid as much as possible the drudgery of the school-room, we may end by loading the curriculum with too many subjects. I do not think we need be so much afraid of this result so long as our Elementary Schools restrict themselves to giving what I may call a knowledge of things in general. The best advice that can be offered to teachers under this head is, I am confident, that of Sir Joshua Fitch, who, in common with most recent writers on the theory of education, exhorts them to “defend jealously the general and liberal gymnastic against the attacks of those who, interested in a particular study or impressed by the immediate practical results of a particular pursuit, would monopolize with it the greater part of the school timetable.” “Do not overload the curriculum,” says Dr. Fitch, “by multiplying the number of necessary subjects, but hold fast resolutely by the recognized and staple subjects which experience has shown to have the best formative value, secure a definite proportion of hours to those subjects, and for the rest of the available time provide as many forms of intellectual and other activity as your appliances and teaching staff have at command.” A great deal of pseudo-scientific knowledge is offered at present as fit and proper intellectual pabulum in our schools. I have myself read the answers to papers in “Physiology” which bore on their very face the stamp of educational valuelessness. Physiology belongs to the class of scientific subjects which are better not taught at all than badly taught, especially when the attempt is made to teach them without any proper equipment. The mere memorizing of facts is certainly not scientific teaching. Similarly with that high-sounding