

## COMMON SCHOOL STUDIES.

NOT long ago some dissatisfaction with the common school studies was expressed through the medium of various letters in the provincial newspapers. Then followed a brief discussion in which the education officials appeared finally to silence their critics; but I could never see, although I watched the contest closely, that the objections urged by the latter were in any case shown to be groundless.

Having for some years been occupied with such matters, my firm convictions drew me to the side of those who contended that the machinery, especially that part of it relating to the courses prescribed for the different grades, had become too complex and cumbersome; in short, that the branches to be pursued were far too many and not of the right assortment. I had witnessed, as one concerned, always with surprise, and often with regret, the rapidity with which change succeeded change in the regulations, and I could not help thinking them more the reverse of improvement than anything else. Accordingly, I hoped that the question would be agitated till the official eyes should be opened and good wholesome reform brought about. In this way I was doomed to disappointment, with many others, who honestly believed that their children were being hampered, instead of helped, by the exorbitant demand laid upon their time and faculties. And if the people then complained that too much was attempted before even the rudiments were fully mastered; they have just reason at present for coming forward with a pretty forcible remonstrance. For the catalogue has been steadily increasing, and of course the number of new books—rather expensive, too, for the kind has kept even pace with it—while real knowledge, in the midst of what is an actual hin-

drance, has in most cases lagged woefully behind, till the bewildered parent seriously asks whether his highly favored offspring will ever be able to earn enough by his stock of learning to pay for his stock of books.

Often as it has been said, it will bear repeating because so often lost sight of—that the great end of education is to fit the person for the work he expects to perform during his lifetime. There are a few things of a fundamental nature which should be made the basis of all instruction, and which should be taught to all, because in some way all will have need of them, no matter what the occupation may be. A sound English elementary education is indispensable, and for the lack of it no faint tincture of half a dozen sciences can ever atone. It is not contended that the pupil should stop when he is in possession of the common implements of learning, but, if means and opportunity allow, he should follow what desire he may have for things of the understanding. Special training for the professions, and the higher accomplishments, literary, scientific and musical, are within the reach of a comparative few, but open to all who have the capacity to learn and the cash to pay for it. Now the vast majority of pupils in our public schools cannot and do not expect to go beyond the common courses. When their period of tuition is over,—generally much interrupted towards its close, say, at the age of sixteen, for boys, they must go forth to battle with the world, to earn their living by hand work, as did their father before them. They are called on to act their part in a field where little avails if the power of dealing with practical facts is wanting or but slightly developed. If they can read well, write a fair hand and