

not be interested in matters of practical teaching, the study of *didactics*,—the science and art of teaching,—would be of incalculable value. It is quite as true of men in other walks of life, —in farming and the trades,—that they “know more than they can tell.” I’m not speaking of that other class who can tell a great deal more than they know! The power to make clear and intelligible statements,—to present any subject in such a way that a child can understand it, is an attainment as valuable as it is rare. There is good reason, then, in this general consideration, and better reason in our pressing need of a State Normal School, that the course of instruction in the proposed agricultural college shall include a department of didactics.

Instruction in military tactics,—required by the act,—will not be amiss; especially if there shall be included in the study the science of turning swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks: a science peculiarly appropriate to an agricultural course.

#### The Cost to the State.

It was probably a well considered feature of the act, that no part of the appropriation can be used for the erection of buildings for the proposed college. In the establishment of institutions of learning, there have been too many examples of improvident expenditures for mere externals, leaving but little means for the weightier matters appertaining thereto. To guard against danger from this course, the act provides wisely, if not *conveniently*, that the State shall incur the expense of erecting or otherwise securing the necessary buildings. This will probably be urged as an objection to accepting the grant. A wise policy, however, will not long weigh the expenditure of a few thousand dollars for this purpose against the magnificent donation thus placed within our reach. If the State should hesitate, in these times of pressure, to make the necessary appropriation for the erection of new buildings, there are other methods still open to us. Of the literary institutions now in operation, there are several which would be very ready to offer the use of their buildings for this purpose.

It is earnestly hoped that the Legislature will deliberate wisely, and decide firmly to pursue such a course as will secure the highest advantages of the contemplated measure, without regard to local feeling or sectional or institutional interests.

The war is not for always. Peace with her nobler pursuits will return to us; we shall need the best possible agencies to develop our resources and to retain our people to the largest intelligence and truest patriotism, and we should hail with pleasure the prospect and the promise of new facilities by which the masses of our population may acquire the scientific and practical education so essential to our highest progress as a great people.

Not doubting that the incoming State Government, like that which is about to retire, will cherish the educational interests of the State, and add to their efficiency as much as in them lies,

I am, gentlemen,

Yours very respectfully,

EDW. P. WESTON,

Superintendent of Schools.

#### SREWES AND MOLES.

The Shrews are among the least known as well as the smallest of any mammals that inhabit our fields and cultivated lands, spending their life almost wholly concealed beneath the surface of the ground, coming forth only at night in search of their insect prey. In the form of their molar teeth, and in the general quality of their food, they resemble the bats; but in habits are necessarily widely different. The shrews are strictly nocturnal, pursuing their avocations in the night; and being insectivorous in their diet, and possessing a very voracious appetite, destroy large numbers of insects and worms and grubs, that prey upon our crops; consequently we must rank them among the true friends of the agriculturist. In their hatred of the destructive field mice, farmers often fail to distinguish between those depredators upon their products and these inoffensive, useful little animals, which not a little resemble the mice in their form. They may be readily distinguished, however, by the most careless observers, by their elongated heads and pointed noses; the absence (generally) of visible external ears, these members being very short and concealed in the fur; and their shorter, thicker, and finer fur; but more especially by their teeth, which are as different as the food they live upon. The mice are furnished with two long, strong incisive teeth in the front of each jaw, fitted for gnawing hard substances, while the remaining teeth are adapted to grinding. The shrews have the incisive teeth small, and not conspicuous like those of the mice, and the others are sharp-pointed and fitted better for cutting and crushing soft food.

The shrews are not very numerous, though of several species, some of which are the least in size of all mammals; and all being quite small, with their nocturnal habits, we need not wonder they are so little known. In New England we have some seven or eight species, but only three or four are at all common. These are the Broad-nosed Shrew (*Sorex platyrhinus*) very minute, weighing about 40 grains, with a tail about the length of the body; the Cooper's Shrew (*S. Cooperi*), nearly as small as the preceding; the Forster's Shrew (*S. Forsteri*), larger with a body nearly three inches in length, and the tail one and two-thirds more; the Mole Shrew, or Short-tailed Shrew (*Blarina talpoides*), which is our largest and most common species, and several others so rare they need not be mentioned.

The Moles are insectivorous, like the shrews, but live more in the ground, feeding upon earthworms and many kinds of insects that fall into or collect in their burrows for shelter. They are much larger than our shrews, and quite differently built, being admirably adapted for their burrowing habits, and are so well known they need not be particularly described. We have but two species, both of which are common; they are the Shrew Mole (*Scalops aquaticus*), and the Star-nosed Mole (*Condylura cristata*). The moles are sometimes complained of for burrowing in gardens and other cultivated grounds, thereby disturbing tender plants by partially uprooting them; but let it