

ESSAY ON MATHEMATICAL STUDY.

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It is pleasing to find, in leaving an old country for a new one, that the same subjects which interest and employ the thoughts of those we have left behind, receive likewise a share of attention in the new country. It might be apprehended that in crossing the ocean we should forsake the pursuits with which we had been previously occupied; and more especially in a young and rising colony where it is the obvious duty of man to reclaim the wilds and change the face of primeval nature, it might be feared that abstract studies would be completely forgotten in the all-absorbing pursuit of material progress. It is satisfactory then to find that Nova Scotia has not severed this link of connection with the older civilizations of Europe, but has provided means for training the youth and promise of her land in liberal studies.

And of all studies that have served to unite men of different ages and countries, and lead their minds in the same journey age after age, there is none perhaps that has so completely attained the end as Mathematics. Ever since the days of Euclid, about 300 B. C., the educated portion of youth have followed the track of reasoning which he marked out for them—striving with the same difficulties—carrying on the same trains of argument—and receiving the same impressions of wonder and delight as new and beautiful truths were opened up to them by his demonstrations.

The subjects of mathematical reasoning are such as to render the study entirely independent of any particular age or country. They belong, not to any accidental or transitory state of things, but to the essential structure of the human mind. They belong not to mere historical fact, but to a philosophy that rises above fact and gathers up into itself all possible facts of a certain kind, present, past and future. Even a new creation of the material world, while it might, for aught we can prove, uproot and overturn all existing systems of Natural History, could not touch the accuracy of one single proposition in Pure Mathematics.