

### SUBJECTS OF STUDY.

The letter of "X." in the December REVIEW has, we hope, been carefully read. It was the plea of a practical teacher who sees, in the multitude of subjects required to be taught in our schools, a source of educational weakness.

Our school courses, it is claimed, are weighted down with subjects, and others are knocking at the door for admission. While some few pupils in each school may be able to acquire a pretty complete knowledge of the subjects of these courses, the great majority of pupils fail in the attempt, give up the contest, and relapse into carelessness and indifference, while the worry and discouragement incident to the attempt to "get up everything in the course," paralyze the energies of both teacher and pupil. It is of paramount importance to education to enquire how far the complaints of our correspondent "X." and others are true.

Have we too many subjects on our school courses? or do examiners and teachers make the mistake of expecting every subject laid down in a course to be taught with too great fulness, instead of having its principles and salient features carefully discriminated and intelligently taught? In answer to the first,—there is no doubt that the tendency is to crowd too many subjects in a course of study. Over zealous persons, estimating too often the importance of a subject from their own standpoint, think that the intellectual pyramid would be complete if only that particular subject should be introduced into the curriculum, and forthwith they devote their energies to that object, too often with success. There are many such subjects that might be taught incidentally, or in connection with other lessons.

In regard to the second point. The State pays for and has a right to expect a sound and thorough training, in the elementary schools, in the three R's. No smattering of a dozen or a score of subjects can make up for the want of this training, either as a mental equipment for everyday life or as a preliminary step to higher intellectual flights. The wise teacher will discriminate, not only in an overloaded curriculum, but in each subject of it, and teach its leading features thoroughly, and incidentally what is of less importance. But how, we hear some asking, can teachers do this when the examiner requires the course, the whole course, and nothing but the course, with all the bearings of each subject thereof? With the possession of good sense and a nice judgment an examiner will not fall into such an error. But for fear that every examiner who reads this may complacently suppose that these qualities belong, in an

especial degree to him, it may be said that quite another species of examiner is "abroad;" and a strong protest should be entered against the absurd and meaningless questions that are too often put forth as tests (?) of pupils' efficiency both in the elementary and higher grades, by examiners who appear to think that it is their special function to puzzle and confuse the pupil, and who appear to have forgotten that they themselves once climbed the difficult path of knowledge. Our correspondent "X." very properly placed a great deal of the responsibility of the superficial work done in our schools upon the shoulders of these examiners.

There are other points in the letter of our correspondent (whom we would be glad to hear from again, and designate by a "known quantity") which we would like to touch upon, and which we may refer to in a future issue.

### CANADIAN TEA.

The *Halifax Chronicle*, last month, editorially referred to the interest manifested at present in the Labrador tea plant. Mr. James Taylor, of Winnipeg, brought the matter before the Schultz Committee at Ottawa, and not only the committee, but the public, appear to be impressed with the idea that the subject may possibly be of industrial importance. The editorial remarks drew out correspondence which showed that the plant is common in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Mr. J. J. Fox, of Halifax, who has seen it used in the Magdalen Islands, and has tried it himself, describes it as "astringent and possessing a narcotic, soothing and exhilarating quality. The infusion has an agreeable aromatic and somewhat astringent taste, its flavor being improved by boiling in milk, and after a few days' use is found to be quite palatable. Formerly these plants were secretly used by fraudulent brewers in the north of Europe, to give headiness to beer. Having used the Labrador tea as a beverage for some months, I can recommend it to those desirous of testing its qualities, and am confident that after using it for a short time its flavor will be found very agreeable and more conducive to health than the common and often adulterated Chinese tea imported for sale."

A writer from Baddeck says: "Cape Breton alone grows enough of this tea to supply the whole Dominion with a delightful beverage at a very moderate figure." It was generally used by the Micmac Indians and the earlier settlers in this island.

The *Colchester Sun* says: "This plant is found almost everywhere in our forests, and when the leaves