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### Classical Study and Instruction.

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(Read before the American Institute of Instruction, at Providence, July 9th.)

We may assume that it is no longer a question whether classical study and instruction shall be maintained in our higher education. The assertion so often repeated of late, that classical learning is no longer required by the present generation, is now rarely heard; and the confident depreciation of classical instruction, in comparison with instruction in modern literature and physical science, has already, to a large extent, been either qualified or retracted. It is now conceded that, for a certain class of educated and professional men, classical study is indispensable, and therefore provision should be made for classical instruction in all the schools of higher education.

A great diversity of opinion, however, prevails in respect to two questions; viz., For what classes of pupils should classical study be prescribed as a necessary, or a very desirable element in their education, and what are the best methods in which classical instruction can be imparted? One of these questions, in a certain sense, involves the other. The answer to the first, *who should study the classics?* must necessarily determine the answer to the

second, *how should the classics be taught?* If classical learning is to be confined to the few who may be expected to become eminent proficient in its grammar and dialects, then it may be proper to teach it after one method; but if it is to be used as an instrument of general culture for a larger number of pupils, of whom few can hope to become masters of its grammatical metaphysics or its erudite history, then it is possible that another method of instruction is to be preferred.

I am aware that some of my hearers will hesitate to assent to these positions. The thought will at once occur to them—whatever is worth learning or teaching at all, is worth learning and teaching thoroughly and well so far as we proceed. Especially would they contend that, in the high schools, it is absurd to sanction, or even tolerate any study or instruction which is not in the most eminent sense thoroughly scientific. Their maxim is—whatever is studied or taught for discipline or culture, must be taught in its principles and after a scientific method; and this, whether more or less knowledge be imparted or received. They urge that the object of higher study is training, and whether the boy studies Latin or Greek one year or ten, so far as he advances, he should follow but one method, and make everything that he learns sure and scientific. All this is plausible to the ear of the mind. On the other hand, it should be remembered, that what is sometimes called a thorough and scientific method, presupposes that the power of analysis and generalization are already developed, or are ready to be unfolded. Moreover, it is a paradox to assert that teaching is sometimes scientific in fact, very nearly in proportion as it is unscientific in form. It may prove itself to be philosophical, by carefully refraining from taxing the powers to efforts that are beyond their natural and easy achievement; *i. e.*, by shunning, rather than following the forms and language of science.

In like manner, that method of study and teaching any branch of knowledge can alone be truly rational which distinctly keeps in mind the end which it seeks to attain, and then wisely adapts the means of accomplishing that end. Four distinct reasons may be given, why the study of the classics should be prosecuted in our schools and colleges. These reasons may be supposed to define