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A PRACTICAL SUBJECT.

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**A**MONG educationists and scholars generally the so-called "practical people" are often among the most unpractical of all men. Many startling anomalies in the educational systems of our time seem at least to confirm this assumption. Certain subjects of the very highest and most obvious educational value are excluded from the range of school studies apparently for no other reason than that they are not "practical" enough. Two subjects may be instanced—phonetics and descriptive astronomy. If the elements of phonetics were taught to the youth of English-speaking countries—and no science is more simple or more amenable to ready experiment—the vexed questions of modes of spelling and pronunciation would speedily settle themselves; reading and elocution would assume their rightful place in the daily programme; and the arbitrary tyranny of the dictionary would be overthrown. If our glorious northern heavens were mapped out and described to our school children—and nothing is more congenial to the youthful imagination and reflection—our cultured citizens would not go

through life with eyes closed to the majestic process of the suns, and with minds unenkindled by the greatest thoughts of God which science has ever revealed to men.

I may also illustrate my meaning by other sorts of broad examples. Take, for instance, the British nation as a whole. It is made up of eminently practical people, averse to theorizing, utilitarian in education, except in the provision that is made for the perpetuation of traditional studies and methods inherited from the university system of the Middle Ages. Observe the result. Sturdy British sense, commercial opportunity and enterprise, still keep Britain in the van of the nations. But its wisest statesmen and thinkers are concerned lest its lack of educational adaptedness and elasticity may seriously cripple it in the race for future supremacy. Mr. Goschen and Sir John Gorst tell the youth of the nation and their teachers that because of the more efficient training, in other words, the more practical education, enjoyed by the boys of Germany, the choice business positions even in England itself, are falling more and more into