

the branches embraced in the Prussian elementary or primary schools, I may premise a few particulars regarding the society just referred to. The object of the society was "to collect, to classify, and to diffuse information concerning the education of all classes in every department, in order to learn by what means individuals may be best fitted in health, in mind and in morals to fill the stations which they are destined to occupy in society." With this view it issued periodically publications containing papers by distinguished individuals at home and abroad, whose large experience and complete success had won for them a wide-spread confidence. These papers seem to embrace almost every method by which education aims to influence society in all its grades. They comprise a vast amount of educational statistics, the result of the society's laborious enquiries. It then consisted of about 250 members, among whom I find such names as Lord Denman, Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord J. Russell, Sir Ed. Lytton Bulwer, Sir Wm. Molesworth, Professor Pillans, Mr. Serjeant Talfourd, &c., &c. The labours of the society were encouraged by the patronage of such ladies as the Lady Noel Byron, Miss Bowles, Miss Chaldner, Miss Maria Edgeworth, Mrs. Jamieson, Mrs. Lambert, Miss Harriet Martineau, Miss E. and Miss F. Porter.

"The subjects taught in the elementary schools have been increased in number, while at the same time each is pursued to a much greater extent than formerly. This improvement has been effected without great difficulty by the aid of teachers who have been regularly trained-up to the business in seminaries established for the purpose, where they not only acquired the art of teaching, but also that of systematically disposing of their time and of using it to good purpose. Reading and writing, which formerly constituted the greatest part of instruction, are at present considered only as parts of the study of the native language. The casting of a few simple accounts, which, 40 years ago, were thought the height of erudition to be obtained in elementary schools, has been pursued to the mathematics. Under the general name of *Knowledge of the External World* are comprehended the first elements of geography, history, natural history, and natural philosophy. None of these subjects formerly were brought before the children in these schools except in a few disjointed notices in the course of reading-books. A new subject has been lately added to this list, namely, *drawing*. The instruction in religion and singing has much increased in intrinsic value, and is likewise carried to a greater extent."

It is interesting and instructive to follow Mr. Wittich in the details which he gives of the six subjects of instruction, which are thus named:

- 1.—Native language (*Mutter sprache* or mother tongue).
- 2.—Mathematics (*Grossenlehre*, or high education).
- 3.—Knowledge of the external world (*Weltkunde*, or world-knowledge).
- 4.—Drawing.
- 5.—Religion.
- 6.—Singing.

From his remarks under the 3rd head, viz., 'Knowledge of the external world,' I beg to read a few sentences, as we may all derive from them some hints of practical utility.

"In passing from the district to the province of which the district forms a part, the teacher continues in the same order; but the information is here of a more general description, and still more so when he passes from their own province to the other provinces of the monarchy. Then he concludes the instruction with a few notices on the statistics and political institutions of the whole monarchy.

"In every section of this course the instruction affords: 1st. A knowledge of space and distances, with the inequalities of the surface occurring in them; 2nd. A knowledge of rocks, kinds of earth, and every thing that constitutes its soil and contributes to its fertility, as climate, exposure to certain points of the compass, &c.; 3rd. A knowledge of the cultivated grains and plants, and also of those in a wild state which occur most frequently, or have some use in domestic economy; 4th. A similar knowledge of domestic and wild animals; 5th. A knowledge of the inhabitants, their trades and occupations, their intercourse and religious creed; 6th. A knowledge of the present political institutions, and of the most remarkable historical events. Every section, therefore, contains the geography, mineralogy, botany, zoology, agriculture, technology, statistics, and history of that portion of their own country which it has the object to make known to the children.

"One of the most zealous promoters of the instruction of the lower classes in Prussia, Dr. Harnisch, in Weissenfels, says: 'I am of opinion that a teacher, who imparts in this way the know-

ledge of their own country to his pupils with intelligence, has taught them things of much more importance than he who causes them to learn by heart the names of the capitals of all the kingdoms, and those of all their provinces on the surface of the globe, and who speaks to them of the history of Greece and Rome, whilst their attention is never directed to the objects which surround them.'

"If at the end of this course his pupils do not leave school, the teacher passes to the other countries of Europe and to the other parts of the globe. Here he gives only a general view of the countries and adds to it only the detail of a few remarkable objects, &c., &c."

In regard to Dr. Harnisch's last remark, the correctness of which every sensible teacher admits, I would simply quote the words of the great teacher, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

It may be remarked here that in Prussia children are compelled by the law to go to school at the age of between 5 and 6 years, and to remain until the completion of the 14th year. The whole course is divided into 2 periods, each comprehending 2 years.

The Council of Public Instruction of Lower Canada, among the Rules and Regulations passed in November, 1861, and approved by the Governor General in Council in March, 1862, have provided (under Article 10th) that candidates for elementary school diplomas must undergo an examination in English or French grammar, geography, sacred history, history of Canada, and the art of teaching. Although reading and writing are not herein specified, it is previously provided (under Article 6th) that candidates must write from dictation at least the half of a page of printed text from the 3rd Reader of the Progressive Series to be approved by the Council. The page must be drawn by lot, or, as we say, *ad aperturam libri*, where the book is opened. If the result of this test should contain too many mistakes in orthography, or if the handwriting be not found good, the candidate may be rejected without further examination. Article 7th provides that candidates must read aloud one page, also selected by lot, in the same 3rd Reader, in a manner showing their capacity to teach reading; and they must also explain the matter read in a way to show that they could make it intelligible to pupils. From these provisions it is evident that reading and writing justly stand foremost amongst the elementary branches, and that a satisfactory proficiency in these on the part of the candidates is regarded as an indispensable prerequisite. It is farther provided that the candidates shall, as regards arithmetic, solve a problem in fractions and another in simple interest.

Bearing in mind then that elementary education implies a competent proficiency in so many truly useful branches, and that the class-books in use frequently comprise selections treating of a great variety of subjects of the highest importance and interest, thereby affording frequent opportunities for extended illustration, of which teachers of the right stamp will not fail to avail themselves, I am disposed or rather forced to conclude that even such teachers will find ample materials for storing the minds of pupils to any amount without superadding others as separate branches. While we speak thus, we are persuaded that many painstaking teachers, anxious for the development of the latent powers of ingenuous pupils, have been instrumental, through private counsel and instruction, in eliciting those powers and imparting a taste for particular departments of knowledge, by the successful pursuit of which these pupils have in after-life attained to eminence and independence. At the same time let teachers be duly impressed with their responsibility to competently train their pupils in the essential elementary branches; never forgetting the words of the first of Roman teachers as of rhetoricians, Quintilian: "*Nam ut vascula oris angustis superfusam humoris copiam respuunt; sensim autem influentibus vel etiam instillatis complentur, sic animi puerorum quantum excipere possint videndum est, &c.*" "*For as vessels with a narrow mouth or neck reject an overflowing supply of water, but are filled by waters flowing in gradually or even poured in drop by drop, so care must be taken how much the minds of boys are able to receive, &c.*"

When long lessons in many branches with insufficient time for due preparation (a practice sometimes attempted to be carried out in the hope of producing extraordinary results) are daily required from pupils, there is great danger of engendering despair of success, indifference or positive disgust for the lessons; whilst thoroughness in the preparation of lessons of such a length as to be adequately mastered by pupils of ordinary industry tends to cherish self-reliance, a love of the school-work, and a thirst for self-improvement. The teacher will act wisely by following a mediate course, so appraising his pupils' powers as to prescribe lessons that may neither encourage under-exertion on the one hand nor engender apathy on the other. *Medio tutissimus ibis.*