

In such cases the body of the people are placed in the power of one or two individuals, capable of transacting business; and if such persons are selfish and designing, the community is brought into difficulty and embarrassment. This would soon be remedied, if all persons interested had the means of watching and checking the designs of deceitful men.

The elements of education put into the minds of a generation will develop talents for practical business of a local and neighbourhood character, which, without these facilities would remain latent. It produces self-reliance and self-respect. Some say "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." It inflates with conceit. It makes pedants. This is a sophism,—one of those maxims put forward as if self-evident, which require proof. Tom Hood calls them "Johnsoniana" from Dr. Johnson's positive style in putting them forward. He instances several, one is,—a mother is advising her promising son not to be good for a hope of reward but from a sense of duty, "Madam," says Johnson, "would you have your son good for nothing?"

There are narrow minds. In fact, a large portion of mankind have minds sufficiently so, and those who know little, will have more contracted views than if they knew more, but on the whole will be more useful, if not more agreeable than if they knew nothing. If a person is vain of a little knowledge, as a general rule, his vanity does not disappear with greater attainments.

Solomon says "if you bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will his foolishness not depart from him." If a man, by reason of having learned to read and write, reads of things that in his philosophy before he never dreamed of, and gains a superficial knowledge of many things which he supposes are new to the rest of the world because new to him, and sets himself to enlighten mankind by lecturing on the abstruse sciences, and makes himself generally more ridiculous than he has any conception of; if with all this he has obtained a knowledge of common things which, raises him a step in life, we can smile at his fantastic tricks, and approve the general result.

Facility to read and write prevents imposition and fraud. If a man cannot read or write he is dependent upon another to state his wishes correctly in a written agreement.

If a man who cannot read and write is a rogue, and wishes to evade a contract he has really made, he always has an excuse, he did not understand its purport. It is the common interest to have all men know what they agree to do, when they contract, that they may be held to it. The benevolence of the age provides instruction for deaf mutes. A man in our day who cannot read and write, to the great moving living world is a deaf mute. It is Government's first duty to give him hearing and speech. What then is expected of the common school system? It has its own place and sphere. It has not to do the work of colleges or grammar schools. It bears the relation to these that the number of small fountains from which trickle little threads of water, bear to the brooks that are made from an accumulation of these threads and rivers, made from many brooks ever flowing onward into the great ocean of knowledge. Common schools do not differ from higher schools merely in degree but in kind. The great majority of the people must be simply graduates of common schools. There should be then a completeness of education of a certain measure. The Prussian schools have been greatly admired for their many excellencies and particularly because all education there was gradatory, every person is educated upon the same pattern, put through the same curriculum in the same way. The common school is the first step in the ladder. This system has been very successful in making an educated people, its results in the production of moral power to the nation are apparent. Is it however desirable that such a perfect uniformity should exist in a system of education? You go into a foundry and see the pattern of Stewart's stove, it is admirable in its arrangements, very perfect as a stove, the mould always produces the same article, if there is a blemish in the mould you have always the blemish in the stove; one scarcely likes this foundry business applied to the mind. "The human form divine" is surpassingly beautiful, but its beauty is in its general similarity, and in its infinite diversity. If a person of great beauty and excellence had a mole on his face or a wart on his hand, you would not wish him repeated so exactly as to perpetuate the mole or the wart.

So far as relates to schools for superior education, I should deprecate this perfect uniformity of teaching or course of study. In a country like ours, where there is no despotic element, and the source of power rests with the people, variety in the modes of higher education, where a large majority of the leading minds must be educated, tends to induce more originality. Thoughts do not run in the same grooves, ideas become more cosmopolitan and less stereotyped.

With the Common Schools of a country it is otherwise. A good system of instruction should be adopted and it should be as far as

possible uniform. Schools will always differ, not so much from the difference in scholars as teachers. Some persons will find themselves at home in a school-room and will communicate instruction with very few facilities, and even with no facilities outside of themselves, they will, by their ingenuity, devise various modes of illustration from the objects around them without maps, apparatus, or even books, if driven to this extremity, while others never will think of doing any thing they have not seen done and in the way they have not seen it done. I once employed a man to put up a spring bedstead and I told him I wanted eight slats with springs, he looked at me with an expression of mingled astonishment and pity at my ignorance—"Why sir" said he, "they never put but six slats to a bedstead." "But," said I, "I want eight." "They never come so, they are never made so, I have sold many and never saw one with more than six slats." I then very solemnly asked, "do you know anything in the law that forbids eight?" "No sir." "Then if you think it would not be against the law, I should like eight." This mechanic brought to his art the same species of mind that many teachers bring to their profession. The object of Normal Schools is not merely to give sufficient instruction to qualify teachers to instruct in elementary education, but to teach them the art of teaching. Here the most approved methods of instruction in the common branches are taught by making the teacher pupils, examples to illustrate them. The value of discipline is learned by the painful ordeal through which they have to obtain it. The great secret of successful teaching is keeping children at one thing till they know it before taking the next. Never mind the time, it is not lost. If a pupil learns one thing and then a second, when he acquires the knowledge of ten things, you can count and measure with exactness his attainments. If he instead, superficially passes through, or rather over, in the same time, one hundred things or educational facts, he has no certain knowledge of any thing. These two modes lie at the bottom of good or bad education, and generally follow one as far up as he goes in learning. A careless teacher who has not sufficient love for his work to be painstaking with his scholars, will encourage his pupils to be inexact and superficial. A superficial scholar will make a careless man of business, and want of careful early training mars the prospects of many men in after life. The object of normal school teaching is to take teacher pupils over the road in the manner they are expected to train others to travel. It cannot give them mind, or heart or taste for the work, unless they have the natural adaptation for it, and when a pupil teacher ascertains that teaching others is to him a drudgery, the sooner he abandons the work of teaching the better for himself and for the cause of education.

Elementary education, unlike that of superior education, may be complete in itself. A person may perfect himself in reading naturally with proper expression, in writing a good hand and the principles of penmanship, in orthography, common arithmetic, English grammar or the grammar of the vernacular, whatever it may be, and in a knowledge of geography without proceeding farther in higher studies. There may be a perfect comprehension of these branches so as to be enabled to teach them well and properly without the absolute necessity of proceeding farther. It is fortunate that this is the case, otherwise our common schools could not be provided with a sufficient number of competent teachers at so moderate an expense as these can now be provided. Reading, writing and common arithmetic form the basis of all mental improvement.

The art of reading is indispensable to enable a person to enter the portals of the palace of recorded knowledge. The art of writing is the means by which we communicate our ideas to others, and, without it, the mind is shut up in a prison.

To whatever extent one proceeds in the higher mathematics, algebra, geometry, calculus, or the application of mathematics to philosophy, astronomy or mechanics, the processes, however varied or far pursued, are all accomplished by the four simple rules of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Hence the importance of thorough and correct teaching in our common schools. Good readers are as rare, if not more rare, than good singers. This should not be. All cannot become good singers, but all can, with perfect organs of speech, become good readers.

It is an accomplishment of the highest order, as well as a prime necessity. Writing is a mechanical process, but for this reason it should not be neglected.

That affectation which would despise good penmanship is not to be commended. Certainly one object of writing is that it may be of such a character as to be read. Sergeant Bell, an eminent barrister in England, is said to have written three hands, one which he could read himself, one that his clerk could read, and one that neither himself nor any one else could read.

None of these are suited to be taught in our common schools. What is desirable for our common schools is, that there should be