

THE CANADA  
EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY  
AND SCHOOL MAGAZINE.

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DECEMBER, 1892.

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THE CLAIMS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

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“WHAT knowledge is of most worth,” is a question that will not down. Bacon, among his aphorisms on studies, endeavours to show that studies may be regarded as specifics for mental faults and defects. If all human beings were of precisely the same pattern the task of giving them mental food and exercise might be essayed with method and hope. Though they vary greatly in capacity and requirement, the maker of curricula for free public schools must proceed on the assumption that they vary but little, not because he believes his assumption, but because it is impossible to construct an elastic and practicable course of studies. Bacon would have adapted the studies to the individual wants: our modern educationist would make a great advance if he could even adapt the studies of our schools to the wants of the average pupil.

The logical course would be to inquire what powers or faculties of the average pupil should be developed by state schools; no doubt if the subject were thus dealt with there would be different replies to the inquiry. But

if a working agreement were reached the next inquiry would be, “what studies will develop those powers most effectively and with the least waste of effort?”

Some may think that these inquiries have been made and that our curriculum is the substance of the replies to them. But a glance at the history of the curricula of school systems must convince the most complacent that many subjects are on the list to-day almost by chance; that is to say, there is no apparent philosophical sanction for the fact that our course includes certain studies in certain amounts. Some of the subjects indeed appear to have been selected in the middle ages because they were curious and ingenious, rather than because they were “of the most worth” in a liberal education.

Most of us have at some time heard a pedagogic reformer prove that our curriculum is nearly all wrong, that it should be demolished by a competent committee of experts and forced to give place to a new, logical, and absolutely perfect successor. And most of us have sighed for the competent