

tions: but it is scarcely to be expected that the theory which attributes their development entirely to classical study will meet with general assent. The concentration of the intellect on a single course of study has a detrimental effect: it destroys that equable and perfect balance of the powers and faculties which is the noblest form of manhood.

These considerations are not a digression from the subject. Style is an indication of character. The formation of style depends on the formation of character. The differences in the prose styles of Macaulay and of Landor—in the verse styles of Wordsworth and Tennyson—indicate proportionate differences in the genius of the writers. In mathematical phraseology, style is a *function* of intellect. It is possible, therefore, that collateral cultivation of style may be more effectual than those direct methods, which in many cases fail.

For direct methods of necessity make style the primary object of study. Now, the most perfect writers are the most simple—those whose theme inspire them to forget themselves. Modern æsthetics see fit to reject the meretricious leafage and angular intricacies which once embellished goblets and decanters, and the ruddy or amber fluid gleams in vessels whose sole beauty is simple and symmetric shape; similarly the disuse of laborious ornament and quaint illustration is a symptom of improved taste in matters of style. The only man who ought to write at all is he who is brimful of his subject—whose knowledge is a fountain too continuous in its flow to be pent within customary barriers, and such a man must of necessity be master of a style so suited to his theme that you would as soon criticise the windings of a river as his mode of utterance. If this be true, we shall best attain our end by teaching our pupils to think; by introducing them to those primary realms of science and literature which are the chief domains of the human mind; by familiarizing them in mathematics, logic and political economy, with those theorems and trains of argument whereby the world is guided in its usual course—and in history, poetry, and mental philosophy, with those heroic passions which have power at critical periods, which are the materials given by the Creator for genius to work upon, and whose intensity in certain nations has given to one or two races of men the perpetual empire of the earth. If, after receiving such education as this, your pupil declines to become an author, and writes nothing but letters to his friends, depend on those letters will be worth reading; if he finds within him those irresistible impulses which compel him to add another to the multitudinous tribe of book-makers, have no fear about his style.—M. C., in the *English Journal of Education*.

COMMON THINGS AT OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Within the last few months public attention has been drawn to a new branch of Elementary Education, the recognised title of which appears to be "Common Things." The subjects embraced under this head are very miscellaneous: we may instance, however, the ordinary laws of natural and physical science, the most obvious principles of social and political economy, human physiology, the productions of art, and the practical duties and offices of every-day-life. If any one should wish a more exact description, we would refer them to a small pamphlet published by Groombridge & Sons, entitled "Ashburton Prizes for the Teaching of Common Things." The title "Common Things," appears to us to be well chosen: it not only specifies the general class of things meant, but it also gives a strong hint that the things should be *commonly known*: they are things, with regard to which an ignoramus, whatever his station, might be fairly taunted with the question, "Why! don't you know such a common thing as that?" The title, moreover, is a humble one.

The only objection we have to a title so unpretending is, that it may on that account be unnoticed by some who are as much in need of the study as the teachers of our National Schools. Let us look higher, and ask what is the knowledge of "common things" at our public schools—nay, even at our universities? If we were to take at hap-hazard a dozen lads out of the higher classes of the former, or the same number from the mass of the students of the latter, what should we find to be the general run of information on these matters? We should like to substitute for the ordinary examination papers the questions proposed to the competitors for the Ashburton prizes in the present year, some of which we append for the benefit of our readers, and we venture to say, that the result would demonstrate a degree of ignorance which would not be found even among the children of a well-conducted National School.* We do not of course deny that there might be, and probably would be, many bright exceptions to this rule; but with regard to them, we must maintain that there are exceptions, and that their superior knowledge is in spite of, and not a result of, our present educational system.

* Explain the construction of the spine or of the hand, and the mechanical contrivances for the different movements which they are intended to perform.

What are the properties of milk as a food and the substance it contains?

Explain the principles of the barometer.

Describe a common suction pump.

Explain the principle of the wheel and axle, and show how it is applied in raising up water from a well.

The sin of which we complain is one of *omission*, not *commission*: that "common things," or, in other words, Elementary Science is *not* taught, and not that classical literature is taught. Education, to be perfect, ought to embrace the *whole* range of intellectual faculties—to give attention that each power be brought out in due subordination to the rest,—and thus to preserve the relation which our constitution points out. But are there not faculties of the highest importance which will remain latent if classical literature be the only instrument applied to evolve them? We will instance the faculty of *observation*, which is strongly developed in youth and which admits of great cultivation. It is a faculty of the highest practical value to man: every branch of science is indebted to it for its important principles. By it, Newton discovered the earth's gravitation, Torricelli the weight of the atmosphere, Galileo the pendulum, Hervey the circulation of the blood, Jenner vaccination; in each case, *common things* were the starting points: an apple falling to the ground—the failure of a pump exceeding 38 feet in depth—the swaying of a suspended lamp, &c. &c.,—things which had passed before the eyes of thousands, but had not been *observed*, from the absence of the intellectual faculty which was able to grasp them. To say that observation alone produced such mighty conclusions from such trifling *data*, is more than we would assert. Observation, in the true sense of the term, implies the existence of other concurrent qualities of a high character; but we still maintain that it is an independent faculty, and that it is one which should be carefully trained. The study of language, however, does not address itself to this faculty: literature may excite it, but does not train it: these both—the first especially—turn the mind inwardly upon itself—upon its own treasures, its own powers, its own constitution; they have a tendency to remove the attention from the outer world of sense and matter, and to give prominence to the reflective and meditative, rather than the practical powers of our nature. The faculty of which we speak is essentially of an opposite character: it is given us for the purpose of dealing with things without us; it is the agent for the conveyance of new materials to the laboratory of the mind; it employs the eye, the ear, the hand as its ministers; but, in order to employ them properly, it requires to be trained, and to be backed by habits of discretion, vigilance, and thoughtfulness.

It is a faculty the seeds of which are strongly manifested in youth. It is that which leads boys out of school to a love of natural history and an observation of the habits of animals: it is that which in school makes instruction by models, diagrams, and experiments more palatable than that which is conveyed by books alone; and which gives force to illustrations borrowed from their own experience. That it is susceptible of culture, we are convinced from the remarkable difference which may be seen between those whose parents and teachers have taken some pains to foster it, and those who have been brought up in a different manner. We detect it in the quick intelligence which glistens in the eye—the vivacity of the whole appearance, and the relish with which new facts or principles are appreciated—a strong contrast to the dreaminess or vacancy of the others. Why, we ask, should not such a valuable faculty be a little more cultivated in our schools? Surely it would be no loss of time—no impairing of the intellectual powers—no prejudice to the study of language and the other branches of education, if an hour or two in the week, at all events, were devoted to the study of natural history—of the common phenomena of natural philosophy—or the processes of art and manufacture. An hebdomadal lecture on "common things" would, we believe, materially hasten, instead of retarding, the abstruse studies now so much in vogue: it would excite habits which would generally sharpen the intellect, and thus enable it the better to cope with them. And while this result would apply to all, there is one advantage which we feel convinced would flow from it, viz.: that it would supply some sort of education to that numerous class of lads who find the study of language so painfully irksome that they get disgusted with it, and who spend their school-days in the most hopeless, and to them useless, drudgery.

It is argued, indeed, that language is the best study for training the faculties, and from this general assertion we do not dissent, but we must be permitted to qualify it by adding, "not for all the powers of the mind, nor in all the persons to be educated." We allow the truth of the assertion just as we should allow that meat was the best food for an able-bodied man, not, however, to the exclusion of vegetables and sundry other accessories in the way of eatables. We maintain on the one hand that there are important faculties which language does not train; on the other hand that there are branches of knowledge which meet these faculties; and consequently, if it be the province of education to embrace the whole of the mental powers and keep them in a state of healthy subordination and due relation to each other, then these branches must be admitted, or else the faculties will wither. The training, in short, should be one of the whole man, and not of this or that portion of him.

If we take the other object of education—storing the mind with knowledge at once useful and elevating—we think the most prejudiced partizan of the old *régime* would hardly dispute the claims of science. Many men of liberal education have cause bitterly to regret their