

dorse the statements, that it is the great desire of all parents to have their children well drilled in those branches; and that to give a thorough and practical acquaintance with all the subjects in the authorized programme consumes more time and energy than either teacher or pupil can spare. This being the case, and considering that our Public Schools should be only elementary, let those who wish more take advantage of the facilities our country offers in the shape of Commercial Schools, High Schools, Colleges, &c. It is well indeed that a person should possess knowledge outside of his profession, but it is well also to have the foundation trustworthy. It is well that anyone may have had an opportunity of enriching his mind, but it is not well that the ornamental should take precedence of the useful. It is well that a knowledge of very important subjects may be obtained by all, but it is not well that all should be compelled to acquire this knowledge, when it is not their desire to do so, and when neither their circumstances nor their requirements demand it. That a state should provide for the education of its citizens everyone will allow, but that it should force these citizens to ignore their own judgement, and to spend years of labor in comparatively unimportant points, (to them) no one would care to assert. For instance: there is nothing wrong in a person who intends becoming a doctor or a lawyer, understanding agriculture, but where is the necessity for it, unless it exist in the taste or desire of the person himself. And so of many other subjects, which are important in a way, but by no means essential.

It may here be objected that a necessity for the numerous subjects in the programme being studied exists, if not in their utility, at least in the mental discipline they afford. As only a very shadowy knowledge of these can possibly be imparted, I fail to see the weight of this ob-

jection. It is for us to decide whether or no a thorough and intimate acquaintance with a few subjects is not much better than a vague smattering of many.

Even granting that moderately fair intimacy with other subjects than elementary could be obtained at our Public Schools—and this is granting a good deal—should we conclude that the mental culture would be superior to that afforded by the common branches? What feature of the mind receives a particular training from the “learning” of Geography? Is Reason more securely settled on her throne by the rote acquirement of Botany or Physiology? Is the perception between right and wrong made the more acute by attempts to understand turbid “Christian Morals?” Is even memory strengthened by being able, parrot-like, to point out the leading individuals and dates of history—simply the skeleton, and very defective at that? I do not wish to underrate these and other subjects, but I do say that they have been elevated into, and have usurped a position for which they were never intended, and which would be better filled by others more practical and useful.

Supposing that the *necessity existed*, is there a possibility of acquiring a knowledge of all the subjects mentioned in the programme? Upwards of thirty subjects to be mastered in that short period, a school-boy's life! Can it be done? If it can; if a man can be made an Admirable Crichton, or walking encyclopædia in a few brief years; if the beardless youth of 16 can be reared in a hot-bed to cross blades with a veteran of 60, then we were born too soon—the royal road to learning has at last been discovered! Some years ago, when the writer taught “Common School,” he found great difficulty in cramming more than the eight or ten subjects into the legal hours; and he is afraid he would have that trouble yet. What were then considered as extra branches, such as Algebra, Book-