

question always open for reconsideration, and to be answered in the light of advancing science. Studies once useful become obsolete; studies useful to one are valueless or hurtful to another. Old sciences are extended, ramified and changed in their relations; new sciences are born. Very often a score of subjects will clamour for admission when only two or three can be mastered. Subdivision of labour is indispensable, and yet, unless judiciously made, becomes itself an evil. General discipline is to be secured, as well as special excellence. A famous German scholar, having devoted his life to the study of Greek grammar, lamented when dying that he had not restricted his attention to the dative case! This, I fear, would hardly do for Canada; and yet the principle is a sound one when rightly applied. It is not known whether Methuselah ever went to school, but if he were living in our day he would need a longer life to master the whole curriculum of learning. To some, it may seem easy to decide what to teach, at least in the common and grammar schools, but the view we take of university education must more or less affect the course of training all the way down to the cradle, and both higher and lower education will take their shape from the philosophy of the time. The practical teachers of the country may not be the best judges in this matter, but they will be when teachers are raised to their proper status, and adequately qualified for their work.

#### HOW AND WHAT SHOULD THE INSTRUCTOR TEACH.

The question, what to teach, complicates with the question, how to teach. If time be wasted and power lost by a bad method of teaching, there will, of course, be so much less room for range and variety of subjects. "Geography," says Burke, "though an earthly subject, is a heavenly study," and yet I have known boys so taught Geography as to waste time enough for the acquisition of a new language. "A new language," says another great man, "is like a new soul," and yet boys are sometimes so taught languages as not only to acquire no new soul, but to lose the old one, giving occasion for the saying that "the study of languages is the soul's dry rot." Spelling is a grand problem, and about as hard to solve as the pacification of Ireland. If I could despair at all of the millennium, it would be from the present anomalous and thorny mode of spelling the English language. It is a disgrace to all who do not believe in works of supererogation. Could we get our orthography simplified and purged of its superfluous material, something would be added to the years, and much to the happiness of children, not to speak of older people, and especially of foreigners. Some seem to regard our present orthography as a part of the essence of our literature, fixed as it were by a law of nature, like gravitation or the circulation of the blood. Such persons should read some of the standard authors in their original form. They need not go further back than Shakespeare or Hooker. It seems from evidence in Parliamentary committees that even Cambridge professors have not yet learned to spell; all things considered, it is not to be wondered at. I have no personal interest in this matter, being a capital speller myself, nor have I any scheme to propose, but if anything ever should open the way to an orthographical reformation, let us help on the change. English grammar, of course, is one of the leading branches of early education, and yet a year or two is often wasted by teaching grammar in the wrong way and at the wrong time. The practical part of grammar is best learned by imitation. Let boys and girls hear only correct and elegant speech, and they will as naturally speak with accuracy and grace as in the other way. The abstract and theoretical part of grammar should be postponed till the faculties of abstract thought have come into play. Latin or Greek grammar is in some respects better adapted to an early age than English grammar. I once visited a common school, in which the teacher was examining pupils, from 9 to 12 years old, in political economy! Shades of Adam Smith! I mentally exclaimed, who would have looked for this! It was torture even to listen to the poor little mortals repeating with blind and mechanical reiteration the definitions, distinctions and demonstrations of this perplexing science. I do not deny the possibility of presenting to the understanding of children some of the elementary notions of political economy, but there are scores of things which I would take up sooner, and especially if it has to be taught in the manner above described. I wish loss of time in such cases were the only evil. It is still a greater injury to give a child a habit of unreality, the habit of talking without meaning, of depending simply on authority in matters of science. Even religion is often in this way made a dead form, and the sublimest of all realities reduced to the shadow of a shade. I do not attempt here to prescribe the best course of elementary training. I aim only at hints, which may be pondered or followed up. In general terms, I may say that our schooling is, for the most part, too bookish, too abstract, and too remote from living realities. Civilization, with all its advantages, has some drawbacks; the want of closer contact with nature is one of them.

#### NATURE AND OBJECT TEACHING.

Much has been said of late of object lessons, and in this we have a recognition of the evil, but only a very partial correction of it. A great German author is said to have done most of his studying in the open air, along the streams and among the trees. It would be well if younger scholars could have more of this privilege. Nature teaches us the true order. The observing powers are the first to come into activity. Children are all eye and ear. They love the flowers, the birds, the rocks and streams. Too soon we imprison them in the world of abstractions. Books must be learned, but early education should be as much as possible deal with nature and the senses. One of the most famous and modern writers complains that with all his learning he was not taught at the proper time, and therefore will never know the characters and names of the common plants and animals of his country. It is useful to know the history of Greece and Rome, of Carthage, Egypt, the Crusades and a hundred other things, but I suspect that much time is consumed over such matters that might better be given to things nearer home, and more fully within range of a child's comprehension. I may take botany for illustration. Few sciences are so well adapted to entertain, enrich or instruct the mind. Eminently suited to the child, it yet affords ample scope to the philosopher. It extends over a wide field; it affords endless variety, it furnishes striking examples of the "reign of law," and of a creative intelligence; it bears a close relation to daily comfort, and it offers invaluable aid to the art of the physician. It challenges us in the grass on which we tread, and in the weeds that grow by the way, as well as in the richer hues of the garden and the grand oaks of the forest. The Creator seems to summon us by fragrance and beauty as well as by the coarser utilities of life, to explore well this amazing kingdom of the plants. And yet it is a study scarcely taught at all in any of our schools high or low. It is supposed to be a nice amusement for a girl at a boarding school, and that, of course, proves it unfit for any one else. He who has noted men in a witness-box at court knows that not one man in a hundred can observe what he sees or give an account of what he has handled. An American Indian has a better education in some important respects than a good many college graduates. Read Cooper's "Pathfinder," and you will see what I mean, and be inclined to agree with me. You will, perhaps, say that the Indian's education is best for him; our own for us. This is only true in part. We all learn many things at school only to forget and sometimes to despise them afterwards. Beyond matters of book lore essential to us all, there is a wide margin where time and toil are wasted or employed to ill advantage. I am convinced, for one, that we need to give more prominence to the education of the eye, the ear, the hand, although it should be at the expense of some other branches of knowledge; but more especially that we should so follow the order of nature as to secure the best economy of time and power. It is melancholy to look back on the misdirected efforts of early years, to feel that the golden affluence of youth will return no more, and that in a sense beyond the meaning of the poet, "Our young affections run to waste, or water but the desert."

#### THE HIGH STANDARD TO WHICH A TEACHER SHOULD ASPIRE.

These reflections bring me to notice the high standard to which the teacher should aspire. He must be competent not merely to teach the prescribed subjects, but also to judge of education as a whole. He is to be no mere hireling of trustees or parents, but a man who makes his calling an arduous and life-long study. He must know a great many things more than he is called upon to impart in the schoolroom. His wider culture may often be utilised even in his humblest toil, but it will especially prepare him to speak with wisdom and authority upon the pressing educational questions of the day. It is not expected that all teachers will reach this point of intelligence, but this is the ideal at which all should aim, and to which many may attain. How else is education to be improved? Experience shows that the mass of men think little on the subject, and experience also shows that nothing, unless it be a bad system of religion, holds on with such grim conservatism as a bad system of education. I regret on many grounds the establishment in this country of separate schools, among others this one, that they will be less open to improvement. "A habit or ceremony," says Addison, "though never so ridiculous, which has taken sanctuary in the Church, sticks to it for ever." This is too true of the Church in particular of which he is speaking, and it is therefore the more to be deplored that education, which needs to be quickened by all the new light of the future, should be pledged beforehand to the blind worship of the past. I cannot approve of the proposition lately made in England to exclude all clergymen from the office of teacher, but clergymen, like other people, should keep pace with the times. It is doubtful if they will do this except through the action of educational and literary influences over