

The regular school hours, in most cities and towns, at present number five, with, on an average, say one additional hour of home preparation ; giving in all six hours per day of study—entirely too much for children in our junior class, and more than they can possibly do, in the way in which study ought to be done.

I am not in possession of data from the consideration of which a definite scheme might be deduced, but from what I know I would favor some such plan as the following :

Let two hours of study per day be the maximum required of children in the first part of the first-book—where they would probably average six years of age—and let this be increased by the addition of half-an-hour for each division to which the pupil is promoted, counting two grades of promotion, i.e. two divisions, to each successive reading-book.

This would bring us to the present six hours in the junior fifth-book class, at say thirteen or fourteen years of age, which is quite as early as it ought to be attempted.

An important fact confronts us here ; one that at first sight might be fancied a drawback to the usefulness of the proposed reform. In all populous localities, very many girls and boys are much better off at school than they would be anywhere else. Some parents are so situated that they cannot, and some are so careless that they will not, look after their children as they should. In such cases, away from the teacher means away from all restraining and elevating influences ; probably undergoing the street education that hardly ever fails to turn out apt and accomplished graduates ; and shortening the hours of school is simply lengthening the hours of exposure to contaminating associations. Against such results we cannot guard too carefully. Relief must be sought that will neither diminish intentness while study goes on, nor shorten the time of the teacher's supervision and control.

It may appear somewhat paradoxical to propose to remedy the evils of over-work by increasing the number of departments of work, but in the present instance this method can be made effectual in securing that result.

There are several branches of instruction that are now barely recognized in our public school curriculum, and yet are so important that their omission leaves us a very imperfect and one-sided teaching system.

One of these is physical education, development of muscle, &c., of which we hear so much but see so little. All our energies as educators are devoted to developing the mind, and the soil in which it roots, and on which it depends, is utterly neglected.

Probably much of the ill-health and physical weakness attributed to excess of mental exertion, are really caused by lack of bodily exertion