

invested with the power of determining just how much or how little shall be appropriated in the district for educational purposes. In many cases ignorance, selfishness, personal animosities block the efforts of the more enlightened and public spirited. In many cases trustees are elected who have no intelligent interest in maintaining an efficient school, and whose greatest merit in the opinion of some of their constituents consists in saving expense. In other cases there is not sufficient interest manifested by ratepayers to induce them even to attend the school meeting. In not a few cases it is impossible for trustees, however earnest and intelligent, to maintain a good school even for one term in the year on the small pittance voted by the ratepayers. But why continue the unpleasant story? It is already too familiar in its vexatious details to many of you who felt the consequences of such unwisdom. In the cities and principal centres of population, the evils of which I speak do not exist except in a very limited degree. The problems difficult of solution are found chiefly in country districts, and must be patiently yet persistently dealt with until the conditions improve. Legislation and regulations of the board of education can do but little to improve these conditions. The truth may as well be stated that the equity of general taxation for the education of the children of the country has not by any means been universally admitted by those who have no children to send to school; as a consequence a policy of obstruction and passive resistance to the administration of the law is still too frequent.

I come now to speak briefly of a few matters of prospective interest to you as teachers. And first I may refer to the course of study. The present course for the first eight grades was authorized five years ago in 1889. There has never been up to the present a complete course authorized for the high schools. A revised course is now being prepared for all grades, including those of superior and grammar schools up to and including the twelfth grade. With the sanction of the board of education, this course will take effect at the opening of the next term, and I trust will be found well adapted to the needs of our schools, and in harmony with approved modern methods and ideas. It has been my purpose to depart from the present course only in regard to matters in which the opinion of educational experts favors a different plan. Some of you have seen and read the report of the committee of ten appointed by the Educational Association of the United States to draw up a syllabus of studies for the schools of that country. These ten invited the co-operation of six other groups of ten each, assigning to each group the consideration of

subjects in regard to which every member of the group was a specialist. Each of these six groups made an extended report to the committee of ten; and the latter compiled their several reports, and prepared a scheme which has been given to the public as the matured result of the best thoughts of the seventy. It would be difficult to devise a plan more likely to accomplish the purpose intended in providing the best possible curriculum for the public schools of the republic. I have studied this report carefully, and have availed myself of many suggestions it contains; but have not thought it expedient to follow too closely its details in the course prepared for our schools, as the conditions are somewhat different. Before formally adopting the revised course for our schools, I propose to submit it for examination to the members of the executive committee of this institute, and to invite their suggestions as to desirable modifications.

In this connection it may be proper to say a word or two in regard to the proper use by teachers of a prescribed course of study for the public schools. It is a difficult task to strike the golden mean between a freedom of action as to subjects taught, and the relative time given to each, which would allow the teacher in each locality to be a law unto himself; and on the other hand to demand a rigid uniformity which leaves no discretionary power to take local circumstances and individual necessities into consideration. And yet a mean between these extremes must be found if we are to avoid on the one hand confusion, disorganization, and waste of time; and on the other a mechanical system which exalts form above substance, and insists that every pupil in our schools shall be stretched on the same procrustean bed. The difficulty may be partly avoided in the higher grades (if a sufficient staff of teachers be employed) by allowing optional studies and elective courses. In the grades below those of the high schools the relative time devoted to each study must be, in some measure, left to the teacher's discretion; for even in the same school the conditions frequently change. The spirit, rather than the letter, of regulations should govern the teacher; but in any modification of a prescribed course of study, he should be careful not to depart from the written record, whether in regard to relative time or subject, except in so far as the best educational interests of any of his pupils shall clearly require a change. It would be detrimental to the general interests to permit the individual opinions, the personal preferences, the prejudices, or the whims, whether of pupils, teachers, parents, or trustees, to determine the kind and extent of the instruction to be given in any school; but