

that there was no intention of inviting the children to gorge themselves, nor to ruin their physical health by cramming them with all these varieties of food. The farmer would point out that some of these articles of food would appear daily upon the table, but that the great majority would appear from time to time to give variety and enjoyment, and to maintain a healthy interest in the frugal meal; and it would be difficult to induce him to discard all the unessential elements of diet and to confine himself to the three or four articles of food which appear daily upon his table.

The same principle holds good with reference to a course of study for elementary schools. The child has been accustomed in the school of Nature to have his mind occupied with a great variety of subjects, and no sudden change should be made when he enters upon school life. The child has little or no power of voluntary or sustained attention. We require to attract the attention of a child by throwing interest and variety into our teaching; we must, therefore, frequently change our subject.

In the great majority of our elementary schools the children are obliged to remain alone at their desks three-fourths of the school time, and during this time they must be provided with interesting work to employ their time. In the case of the majority of these pupils this must be mechanical work. There must be a pleasant variety in this work, or the pupils will soon tire and turn from work to idleness and mischief. In accordance, therefore, with the principles of child nature and the requirements of our schools, a variety of pleasant and interesting work has been provided in the course of study in our elementary schools in addition to the three or four fundamental subjects of the course. But, as we sometimes see a man discuss in order at one sitting every item of a menu card at a hotel, from the soup to fruit, and as some mothers abuse the abundance of the winter's supply by allowing their children to gorge themselves with varieties of food, so mistakes are, no doubt, sometimes made by teachers in applying the educational bill of fare which has been prescribed by our schools; and I am disposed to believe that the complaints which have been made against our course of study have been due in a great measure to the manner in which the course of study has been applied. For example, there seems to be an impression that in order to do efficient work each of the subjects prescribed in the course of study should be taken up each day—that the pupils in the upper classes should prepare at home each night lessons in all or nearly all the principal subjects of the course. There can be no