

essor chooses, and often gives no sign of anything more than automatic existence. What is true of individuals is to a certain extent true of nations. A nation ought not to be less noble in reason, less infinite in faculty, less god-like in apprehension than a man. A brainless being though he may win the long jump with two-and-twenty feet, bears only the outward semblance of humanity; in the essence of him he is little better than a forked radish. A short time ago a pointed article appeared in the *Star* on the advantage of fostering the mental life of the Dominion, and we hope it was not without its reward. We are reminded of some remarks by John Ruskin concerning the use of books, and although they do not bear exclusively on the matter of which we are speaking, they deserve to be quoted in connection therewith:—

"Life being very short, and the quiet hours of it few, we ought to waste none of them in reading valueless books; valuable books should, in a civilized country, be within the reach of every one, printed in excellent form, for a just price; but not in any vile, vulgar, or, by reason of smallness of type, physically injurious form, at a vile price. For we none of us need many books. And those which we need ought to be clearly printed, on the best paper, and strongly bound. And though, we are, indeed, now, a wretched and poverty-stricken nation, and hardly able to keep soul and body together, still, as no person in decent circumstances would put on his table confessedly bad wine, or bad meat without being ashamed, so he need not have on his shelves, ill-printed or loosely and wretchedly-stitched books; for, though few can be rich, yet every man who honestly exerts himself, may, I think, still provide, for himself and his family, good shoes, good gloves, strong harness for his cart or carriage horse, and stout leather binding for his books. And I would urge upon every young man, at the beginning of his due and wise provision for his household, to obtain as soon as he can, by the severest economy, a restricted, serviceable, and steadily, though slowly, increasing series of books for use through life; making his little library, of all the furniture in his room, the most studied and decorative piece; every volume having its assigned place, like a little statue in its niche, and one of the earliest and strictest lessons to the children of the house being how to turn the pages of their own literary possessions lightly and deliberately, with no chance of tearing or dogs' ears."

Of all the subjects which it is within our province to discuss, education is undoubtedly the one of most importance to all classes in the community, and it is therefore the one in which we feel the greatest interest, and concerning which we are most often led to speak. The exact relation of education to material advancement would form a subject of no small interest in itself, but it is not upon this feature of the question that we at present wish to dwell. We shall content ourselves with laying down the indisputable fact that in any country the general advancement will take place in direct proportion to the education of the people, other factors being supposed equal. It follows logically that the proper policy to be adopted by any community is to find and carry out the best plan for popular education. In carrying out the details of any system of popular education, one of the problems which at once present themselves is to decide what branches of instruction are to be selected as the fittest to be taught in the public schools. The shortness of the time which can be spent at school makes this determination of the relative value of knowledges necessary, to use Bacon's expression. The standard by which this determination is to be made is undoubtedly that of usefulness. So that those subjects ought to be taught in the ordinary schools which are likely to be of the greatest service to the majority in after-life. Up to a certain point not much difficulty is found in distinguishing what these subjects are: and it is quite unnecessary for us to enter into any enumeration. Beyond this point, however, opinions begin to diverge, and they continue to diverge more rapidly as it becomes more difficult to apply the standard. Now it seems to us that in the case of public schools, since they are maintained by the community for the good of the community, the object to be kept in view is the general benefit, that is the benefit of the community as a whole. It is only on these grounds that the community as a whole has any right to meddle with the education of its members. We, of course, recognize that the character of the community will depend upon the condition of the majority of the individuals that compose it, but this does not alter the way in which we must look at the question. We are led to speak on this subject by a letter which appeared in our last issue, complaining

of the system of education pursued in our Common Schools as being ill-calculated to prepare boys for the struggle to make a living, as well as for other reasons, to which we shall refer presently. Now although we must be careful to recollect that it is by no means the sole object even of our common schools to enable young men to make a living, yet this forms a great part of the whole, and a part which demands our first attention. The object of schools maintained by the community must be, on the very ground that they are thus maintained, to make good and profitable citizens, but the very first requisite towards making young men good citizens, is to give them means of self-preservation and support. Thus any complaint as to the inadequacy of our present system for that purpose ought to be carefully examined into, and all the possible means of improvement rationally discussed. In the present case we must confess that the grounds of complaint have been very vaguely and confusedly stated. Gathering together the different parts which bear on this particular point, the charge seems to consist in this: that after boys are taught to read, write and figure, they learn little that can be of any practical use to them in after-life; that they are required to commit to memory a mass of facts, concerning which they never reason, and which they are not allowed to state in their own words; and that the method of instruction employed does not afford sufficient opportunities for exercising the reasoning faculties. The remedy suggested is, to teach the pupils a little logic, and even a little political science, and to give them every opportunity of exercising their reasoning faculties. We cannot claim to have a very intimate knowledge with the working of our common schools, but we were under the impression that something more than reading, writing, and figuring was taught which was of practical use. If this be not the case, we recommend most strongly that some of the ordinary subjects, such as grammar, geography, history, composition, and elementary mathematics be added—a knowledge of which is eminently useful and eminently practical. We cannot, however, agree with the writer of this letter that after a boy has learned how to read, write, and figure, he should proceed to the study of political science and logic. He must evidently consider the disease to be very desperate, for he proposes a very desperate remedy. In the highest classes some logic might possibly be taught with advantage, but the proposal to try and impart a knowledge of these subjects at the early stage proposed in X's letter, is too evidently unwise to need any discussion. As to committing to memory masses of dry facts, it is one of the necessities of education, and all that can be done in the matter is to present these facts in as palatable a form as possible. Education from one point of view may be considered as consisting of two stages, the one being the period during which we attain so a knowledge of elementary facts, and the other in which we use our faculties in more or less original work. The ordinary school period seems to lie well within the former of these stages. As the writer says, to all intents and purposes the real education of the pupils does not begin until they have left school, but then this after education is built upon the foundation laid in the common school, and its success to a very large extent depends upon the character of this foundation. Of course even in the schools there is a certain amount of what we have described as original work, and we quite agree that every opportunity of exercising their reasoning faculties ought to be given to the pupils, but we must not expect too much at this early stage.

But the letter to which we refer contains a second and distinct charge, which opens up a subject into the discussion of which we have considerable diffidence in entering. It is the old complaint against the purely secular education of our public schools. On this subject our views differ entirely from those expressed in the letter. Neither in the interests of religion itself, nor for the carrying out of the primary object of public schools, do we think that religious instruction should be given. Experience fully corroborates what might easily be foreseen, that the religious instruction which could be given in public schools tends very much to produce irreligiousness, and a total want of that reverence without which religion is impossible.

We are obliged to our Morrin College friends for their communication. The matter to which they refer does not deserve any notice from us, and on the letter to which they direct our attention, the old line from Horace—*Vis consili experts mole ruit sua*—is an apt commentary.