

## THE STUDY OF CLASSICS.

## AN ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE ITS TRUE EDUCATIONAL POSITION.

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IT has been truly said, "in whatever light we view education, it cannot fail to appear the most important subject that can engage the attention of mankind." To this subject we are giving the attention of a lifetime, and to-day, when the long vacation now drawing to its close has cleared away all remembrance of the meaner difficulties of our work, we may catch a fresh inspiration for more fruitful effort from the noble words of Tyn-dall: "If there be one profession in England of paramount importance I believe it to be that of the school-master. . . . When a man of enlarged heart and mind comes among boys—when he allows his being to stream through them, and observes the operation of his own character evidenced in the elevation of theirs—it would be idle to talk of the position of such a man being honourable. It is a blessed position." And, altering his words: "Such men, I believe, are to be found in Canada, and it behooves those who busy themselves with the mechanics of education at the present day to seek them out. For no matter what means of culture may be chosen, whether physical or philological, success must ever mainly depend upon the amount of life, love and earnestness which the teacher himself brings to his vocation."

Now the striking truth of such words as these has led many to say, "The question is not what but how," which is but half the truth. Yet "not what but how" points to an ideal method and a certain half-defined end with regard to which educationists stand in the strange posi-

tion of men who work—for what object they have not yet clearly determined. At a last analysis we find that the goal is human happiness, but the problem is thus merely set again. A long step forward was taken when we arrived at the conception that as a physician cannot undertake the cure of the body without a knowledge of its anatomy, so neither can we train the human mind without a knowledge of its operations. We might carry the analogy still further, and say that as the physician must also know thoroughly the action of his drugs, so too is it absolutely necessary that the teacher should know clearly the specific action of the subject he teaches, and the specific action and interdependence of all educational subjects. As Launcelot Gobbo would say, "the old proverb is very well parted between us." The doctors have the *corpus sanum*, and we the *mens sana*. But I fear there is yet a third resemblance in the two professions. As new subjects continually claim attention do we not say desparately, "Here are many good things. Let us give them all." We have indeed more than the *mens sana* in our care. "How," exclaims Thoreau, "can we expect a harvest of thought without the seed-time of character?" But let us confine our attention for the moment to the pathology of the *mens non sana*. Its obvious characteristics are inaccuracy, a great repugnance to thinking, lack of judgment, and deadness or entire absence of imagination. Do we not often feel the real ineffectiveness of our work in each of these respects? Take the