

"In the endeavor to extend the field of study over so large an area, each science receives scarcely more than a single term's study. What can be done with such subjects as zoology, physics, astronomy, and botany in twelve weeks? By the present prevalent method, a pupil has no sooner acquired a little momentum in a certain direction, and begun to find himself in sympathy with certain lines of thought, than he is rudely stopped and thrown into a new field of investigation, to repeat the same absurd performance. Some heroic soul is going to draw a pencil through half the subjects in the high school course one of these days, and endeavor to secure something like a fair acquaintance with the other half."

No doubt the system of options lately introduced into our high school programme has afforded a measure of relief to the students, but what about the teachers who are obliged to split their time into smaller fragments, or to teach extra hours to cover the extra work? Our advice is that masters themselves should choose the options for their own schools and thus keep the course well within the teaching power of the staff. *Non multa sed multum.* Confine the study of junior students within tolerably narrow limits; deepen the channel of thought; and keep up a high standard of examination.

#### HISTORY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

We confess deep dissatisfaction with the present system in the subject of History. "Proceed from the known to the unknown" is the keynote of the programme in geography, in arithmetic, in reading. But when we come to the item of history we find the maxim exactly reversed. Proceed from the ancient Britons to Victoria, proceed from unknown centuries to our own times, begin with a country separated from the known *here and now* by 3,000 miles of space and 20 centuries of time, says the programme in laying out the child's first course in the wide study of history. On what ground can this be defended?

Some say the learner must have first of all a bird's-eye view, must have the great land-marks of history firmly fixed in the memory. Let us not abandon the principle on which we teach science, mathematics, geography, for a mere unproved hypothesis. Having established a sound principle and found it victorious in teaching chemistry, why should we let go of it when we come to teach history, the exact parallel of chemistry in many important particulars? Must the learner first of all get a bird's-eye view of chemistry? Must he not rather sit down and study the facts that are most easily accessible, and get some idea of what chemical action really is by carefully observing and comparing things which he can know for himself at first hand? In the study of history the child must begin with the known; he must get his first ideas of historical movement in the same way as he gets his first ideas of number; he must construct the historical unit before he can possibly compare, classify, and generalise the great mass of details included in the history of any country. He must begin with what he can realise, appreciate, understand. We do not deny that a

child may be drilled over dry dates and the names of great events (to him wholly meaningless) until he has the outward semblance of historical knowledge. But what is the benefit of such teaching beyond the mere exercise of the memory involved? Does a child so taught really *know* any one single thing about history? Certainly not. Perhaps some truth, some historical perspective, may dawn upon his mind in after years as his powers of reflection and constructive imagination come to maturity. Meantime, he has absolutely no knowledge of history. Let those accustomed to examine public schools witness the truth of the statement. The answers to the entrance examination papers settle the question forever.

The history of his own county, the history of his own country, the history of the mother country, the history of countries nearly related, the general history of the world,—Canada, England, United States, Rome, Greece,—are not these the steps indicated by the great maxim we have quoted? Three months' work on Canada since 1763—three months' work on England since 1688—there in a nutshell lies the *possible, practical, teachable* course of study for Canadian public schools. Away with the mass of dry bones. Let us have HISTORY, something that a boy can see and feel and appreciate; something with educative power in it. Down with the ancient Britons.

In this matter our cousins across the lines are much in advance of us. Every child there knows first of all the history of the country in which he lives. History in that case has a species of fascination. Patriotism wells up spontaneously, oftentimes effusively. We are at the very opposite pole. The history of the last three hundred years is less familiar to our pupils than are the times of Alfred and William the Norman. The history of the last hundred years in Canada is least known of all. How blindly must a young Canadian follow the march of events from year to year who knows little or nothing of his country's history through the stirring times when his grandfather was a boy. There are great questions and struggles still to come. Let us prepare our pupils for the duties of citizenship, even in defiance of the bird's-eye and landmark hypothesis. Canada for us Canadians, Britain for us British; but let charity begin at home.

#### NORMAL INSTITUTES.

Mr. Friesner gives in the December number of the *Ohio Educational Monthly*, some of the "Good Points in Iowa's Schools." He mentions very small school districts; a State University; a State Normal School; a State Teachers' Association at which there is a large attendance; county superintendents, some of whom are ladies; no politics in local school elections; few changes in school-boards, teachers and superintendents; and county normal institutes, one of which is conducted each year in every county in the State. These institutes are the analogues of our county model schools. There is a uniform course of study for the State, consisting of four years'