

one, that while they are shut out from participating in the enjoyments and pursuits which knowledge offers to its possessors, they naturally desire mental action and excitement, and find their gratification in low pursuits and dangerous vices. The purpose of our system of education is to supply the necessary education, but it will be a long period before the system we have inaugurated shall meet all the defects of past neglect; and however successful and widespread that system may be, as a country whose population must grow out of immigration, we shall still be subject to the deluge of European ignorance. In this view, elementary instruction for adults becomes an object of national importance, and Mechanics' Institutes, whether in that or higher education, have as strong a claim upon the support of the country as Universities, High or Public Schools.

NATURE OF THE STUDIES IN THE PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT.

The really essential subjects of instruction in classes for adults are few. These subjects are—(1) READING and SPELLING; (2) ARITHMETIC; (3) PENMANSHIP. In the arrangement of these studies, a system of grading like that adopted in the best class of Public Schools should be established. Throughout the land, in city and rural districts, there will exist a large class scarcely able to read or write, or make the simplest calculations. Amongst this class there will be found many obstacles to study—a false shame, or an utter indifference, or a disposition to magnify the difficulties or undervalue the importance of the studies under consideration. We make great efforts to secure scholars for the ragged and the Sabbath schools; and the necessity for pressing adult ignorance, especially when it is full of the life and energy and restlessness of youth, into our evening classes is equally great. The most ignorant—those who cannot read at all, or write their own names—ought to find the evening classes ready to help their necessities, and to give the help in the best and kindest spirit. While every inducement should be offered to lead the ignorant to enter on to the path of improvement, every objection or obstacle likely to discourage the beginner ought to be removed. In all cases the teacher, whether a paid or a voluntary agent in the good work, ought to exercise

patience and gentleness and firmness. It is always unwise to allow boys and girls to associate in the classes with adults. In the adult, there is the consciousness of ignorance and sensitiveness to ridicule or impertinence, and in the young a disposition to exercise these powers. One means of inducing the most ignorant class to pursue these studies would be that of reading to them selections full of interest and beauty, but simple and equal to their comprehension, to show them what delights the faculty of reading would open up to them, and how much they were losing by its want. Thus, too, in the study of arithmetic, while head and hand practice should predominate, and theory be disregarded, yet purely mental exercises suited to the understanding, but not in any respect childish, ought to be mingled with the regular practice. It would add also to the charms and attractions of study if the teacher would sometimes throw aside all books, and give in the most familiar style a popular lesson in popular geography or astronomy, and by a mere statement of interesting facts connected with the one, or marvellous wonders discovered in the other, excite attention and inquiry; while the practice might be varied by an occasional lecture on "Common Things," and the philosophy of "Common Life." While these arrangements have reference to the grading and instruction of the lowest class of students, the curriculum must embrace that class which has not been altogether neglected, which possesses some knowledge of elementary subjects, aspires to higher attainments, and by previous culture is prepared to pursue them. A second grading in reading would have reference to delivery, expression, the power of uttering literary composition with the distinct articulations and scientific inflections of the elocutionist; and arithmetic would be expanded into a science, embracing a knowledge of Fractions and Ratio, and their application to science, commerce, popular mathematics—*i.e.* elementary algebra and geometry and mensuration. Again, instruction in plain book-keeping is necessary, especially when females attend the classes—and their attendance ought to be contemplated in all evening classes. But here the instruction should be simple, and aim at nothing higher than facility in keeping the details of common life, and in the case of females, of household expenditure. The elaborate systems of book-keeping em-