

good literature,—but none receive from the study of English the mental power which it would give if properly taught. Why did the Conference ignore this third important object? Why did they not do for English what the evolution of a thousand years did for Latin? make it one of the best instruments of mental discipline that we yet possess. Well, we hope that hereafter, with less of the scholastic and more of the scientific method in our schools, it will not take a thousand years to evolve a rational and practical method of teaching English so as to secure to the fullest extent the threefold object in view.

One of the "most interesting opinions" in the report is "that the best results in teaching English in *high schools* cannot be secured without the aid given by the study of some other language." We are thankful that the *common schools* are not included. It is certain that some interesting results are obtained by combining the study of these languages as the Johnsonian English of some of our text-books shows. We prefer, however, the English of Shakespeare, Swift, Scott, and our own Joseph Howe, who "knew little Latin and less Greek." We have often wondered what other language the ancient Greek associated with his own in his linguistic studies—or was it the absence of any such misdirected energy that enabled him to achieve such miraculous results in languages, philosophy, and art in such a short space of time? We would seriously ask what the result would have been, if the study of classics had been intensified in the hands of a few specialists, and if all the time and energy which have been given by the great mass of students to classics during the centuries, had been as persistently and skilfully devoted to the vernacular and to other useful studies? There can be only one answer. The world would have been five hundred years in advance of where it is to-day. The rapidity of its progress would have been comparable to that of the Greeks during their golden age.

Before giving a short outline of the special recommendations which we find in the report, we will refer to a general principle, which, if acted on, would enable the teacher and pupil to find more than time and strength enough to master our course of study—such a bugbear to those who do not understand that underlying principle on which depends all true progress in education. The principle is this: Forms of expressing thought should be incidentally acquired in the search for truth. To illustrate by an example connected with the subject of our remarks: Composition can be incidentally taught by asking a pupil to describe accurately a plant which he is studying or an event in history, etc. Geography and history are thought studies, and form practically one subject.

Drawing is a mode of expressing thought and is best taught when illustrating forms of plants, animals, etc. Thus from a judicious concentration of studies there results such economy of time and energy, that the course of study no longer assumes the aspect of a grim tyrant. Under such a method, cram would be impossible. Rein, of Germany, Colonel Parker, of the United States, and Professor Hall, of Truro, are advocates of the theory of concentration of studies. Without being committed to any particular theory, Dr. Mackay has made this doctrine practical in Nova Scotia by largely modifying the course of study in accordance with it. The change implies trained teachers and less cram.

The recommendations of the Conference are for all schools from the primary upwards:

1. During the *first two years* at school children may acquire fluency of expression by describing correctly what interests them; and they may acquire some knowledge of penmanship and spelling by writing short sentences of their own construction. We have seen this method carefully followed out producing the best results.

2. This work may be greatly extended after the second year by directing attention to the more common irregularities of words and to idiomatic expressions. Paraphrasing is not recommended. Spelling is to be learned incidentally in connection with written exercises on the subject studied, and not from a spelling book. All written exercises should be carefully corrected.

3. Formal grammar, if studied at all in the common schools, should not begin earlier than the thirteenth year of the pupil's age, and should be completed in one year. All that is really necessary for the pupil to know of grammar, in order to enable him to write good English, may be learned incidentally.

4. Reading books should be mainly of a literary character, and should be early replaced by standard authors appropriate to the age of the pupil.

5. In the high school course English should occupy five hours a week for four years. In recommending so much time to the study of English the members of the conference are anticipating somewhat the importance that will some day be attached to the cultivation in school of a love for good reading. The teacher who will give his pupils a discriminating taste for good literature may well be excused for many shortcomings in other subjects.

6. Every teacher is responsible for the use by his pupils of good English in all their school exercises. By unremitting drill pupils may be made to be particular in their choice of words and phrases.

7. Giving examples of bad English and bad spelling for correction is likely to do more harm than good.

8. No student who is very deficient in ability to write good English should be admitted to college.