

and theoretical part of grammar should be postponed till the faculties of abstract thought have come into play. Latin or Greek grammar is in some respects better adapted to an early age than English grammar. I once visited a common school, in which the teacher was examining pupils, from 9 to 12 years old, in political economy! Shades of Adam Smith! I mentally exclaimed, who would have looked for this! It was torture even to listen to the poor little mortals repeating with blind and mechanical reiteration the definitions, distinctions and demonstrations of this perplexing science. I do not deny the possibility of presenting to the understanding of children some of the elementary notions of political economy, but there are scores of things which I would take up sooner, and especially if it has to be taught in the manner above described. I wish loss of time in such cases were the only evil. It is still a greater injury to give a child a habit of unreality, the habit of talking without meaning, of depending simply on authority in matters of science. Even religion is often in this way made a dead form, and the sublimest of all realities reduced to the shadow of a shade. I do not attempt here to prescribe the best course of elementary training. I aim only at hints, which may be pondered or followed up. In general terms, I may say that our schooling is, for the most part, too bookish, too abstract, and too remote from living realities. Civilization, with all its advantages, has some drawbacks; the want of closer contact with nature is one of them.

Much has been said of late of the object lessons, and in this we have a recognition of the evil, but only a very partial correction of it. A great German author is said to have done most of his studying in the open air, along the streams and among the trees. It would be well if younger scholars could have more of this privilege. Nature teaches us the true order. The observing powers are the first to come into activity. Children are all eye and ear. They love the flowers, the birds, the rocks and streams. Too soon we imprison them in the world of abstractions. Books must be learned, but early education should as much as possible deal with nature and the senses. One of the most famous and modern writers complains that with all his learning he was not taught at the proper time, and therefore will never know the characters and names of the common plants and animals of his country. It is useful to know the history of Greece and Rome, of Carthage, Egypt, the Crusades and a hundred other things, but I suspect that much time is consumed over such matters that might better be given to things nearer home, and more fully within range of a child's comprehension. I may take botany for illustration. Few