

with their existence, whereas if left to after years, the impression received, although at first sufficiently strong, will, in its duration, be comparatively transient.

In recommending the study of our criminal code, as far as it relates to the nature and definition of public offences, and the extent of punishments, the Superintendent is aware of the novelty of the proposition; but he is confident it will not be thought useless nor impolitic, when it is considered how much it concerns every man to know what acts are criminal in law, and what measure of punishment is provided for them; and when it is also considered that many acts are made criminal by the Legislature, which, not being so independent of positive regulation, are to be learned only by study and research. It cannot have escaped the most common observation that offences, made such by the acts of the Assembly, are often committed through ignorance of the law, and that the guilt of violations, is sometimes incurred through ignorance of the extent of their criminality. And while it is recognized as a fundamental principle that "ignorance of the law excuses no man for its transgression" no man can be safe without some knowledge of those acts for the transgression of which he is unconditionally answerable. The influence, also, which such knowledge has on the mind, is another consideration, not less favorable to its early cultivation. If a knowledge of the nature of crimes and punishments be early impressed on the minds of the children, their abhorrence of criminal acts cannot fail to be deep and enduring, and the probability of their committing them proportionably diminished. It may, however, be proper to observe, that it is not intended to recommend the study of the law generally in Primary Schools; but of such parts only, as every man of business ought to know, and which, if he does not learn at school, he will find himself deficient in the ordinary pursuits of life. A knowledge, for example, of what contracts should be in writing; of what solemnities are required in wills and other instruments, of what consideration is necessary in certain agreements; and of such other parts of law as are of like applicability to our daily concerns and avocations, is of such obvious importance that it cannot be necessary to urge arguments in its favor.

It may perhaps be objected to the course of study here prescribed, that it will require more time than children ordinarily have to spend at school. In answer, however, to that objection, it might be observed that most children spend the greater part of their time at school, between the ages of five and fifteen years, a length of time much great-