

through the regions of antiquity, and through foreign countries, while that knowledge which is indispensable to success in life is entirely neglected. Such a system of mental training, until the character of the mind is formed, is destructive in the extreme, and is cursing and has cursed the human race. It produces in the action of the mind a paramount centrifugal tendency.

It is not intended to argue that the study of the dead languages should be abandoned altogether, but that they should be made but an incidental or secondary consideration, and not of primary importance. It is generally believed to be necessary that the languages should be studied in order to improve the style and store the mind with imagery. In reply to this can it be supposed that sciences based as they are upon rules of perfect accuracy should not teach the most exact use of language, and that all nature does not furnish a better store-house of imagery than the fancy of ancient poets.

It must be apparent to all, after an *exact* and complete knowledge of the elements of an education, that the history of our own country is of primary importance; it furnishes facts of a character superior to that of any people that have lived, whether they be for declamation, for reasoning, or for lessons of patriotism and wisdom; and this being the case, why travel into antiquity and consume there the prime of life, until it is too late to learn our own history. The next question of importance should be the origin and structure of our own government, and the acquisition of an accurate knowledge of our Constitutions, State and Federal. These last should be made a text book, with questions, in every school, and so studied that every citizen should know them by heart. The subject next in importance should be our own natural history, and then the natural history of the world. The study of the latter would be an inexhaustible source of knowledge and reasoning—for it furnishes a system of logic infinitely superior to any to be found in our schools. A general comparison of the different tribes of the birds and animals of the earth, and reasoning upon their attributes, will be always the source of the finest moral suasion.

One other extract the committee will make from the reports of Massachusetts as containing an important and practical truth:

“The practice of putting the children into advanced studies before they have mastered the primary and more important ones, is one of the greatest defects of our present school system. A child can learn to read and spell easily and correctly when his attention would be employed on geography and arithmetic to very little profit. And if these most important of all branches of school education are not acquired in childhood, it is seldom that the work is well done. The defect in spelling in most of our schools is greater than in reading. It is often hurried off with little attention and as little preparation. The omission of syllabication—not pronouncing the syllables as they are spelt—is a growing evil against which the committee constantly remonstrate in their school visits.”

“’Tis education forms the common mind,
Just as the twig is bent, the tree’s inclin’d.”