

**OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS A DEAD FAILURE.**

**NO PARTICULAR PERSON RESPONSIBLE.**

Millions in Stone, Brick and Mortar—  
The Cost of Maintenance Far in  
Excess of Their Utility.—A Rad-  
ical Change Demanded.

(WRITTEN FOR THE TRUE WITNESS.)

This city expends large sums of money annually for public schools in order that the children of the city may be educated. It does not expend too much. There is nowhere complaint of that sort. The trouble is that the money spent is not well spent. It does not produce proper results. There is no proportionate gain to the expenditure. The schools are unscientific and inefficient in their methods. They are behind the age. They are grafts from an unsound exotic plant. They are very inferior to those of other cities which make pretension to maintain a good school system.

Let anyone who doubts that this is the truth of the matter, make a thoroughly systematic examination of our public schools, and if he can speak with expert knowledge and authority, so much the better, all doubt will disappear the moment he reports his experience.

It would be an immense gain for those concerned in the public schools of this city, to read some of the articles appearing in the leading periodicals of the day, on the public school systems of the principal cities of North America, in order to learn by comparison how inferior are the schools that are tolerated here, at a much higher *per capita* expense.

A man with the proper qualifications, possessing expert knowledge and authority, in reporting what he would see and learn through actual inspection of our public schools, would be forced to the conclusion that the system prevailing and the methods followed, are such as would make any intelligent citizen ashamed. The whole scheme of instruction is dry, lifeless, mechanical, narrow and cramping. It is an application to human beings of the method employed in teaching parrots to talk, horses to perform tricks, or bears to dance. Mind, aside from its faculty of memory and repetition, appears to have no consideration. The memory is overtaxed with useless rules and exceptions; and parrot-like repetition is the safety valve for the pent-up explosives.

The result is what might be expected. The pupils develop no intellectual eagerness, no curiosity for knowledge, no power of thinking or reasoning. They do not even make as much progress in the special work of their grade as children more rationally taught.

That this is no exaggeration or morbid picture of facts, let us look at the results of two distinct systems found side by side in Montreal: one the public school system; the other the Christian Brothers' system.

In the public schools, the primary reading is so poor, so mechanical that the children are scarcely able to recognize new words at sight at the end of the second year. Even the third, fourth, and most advanced year reading is miserable, all but intolerable. In most of the Christian Brothers' schools the children read better at the end of the second year than they do in the public schools at the end of the third and fourth years. Indeed, it could be truthfully said that in some of the Brothers' schools the pupils read as well at the end of the first year, as they do in the public schools at the end of the third, and this in spite of the fact that the Brothers' schools are charming the pupils—even those from the poorest of homes—governed by love and sympathy.

Why do our public schools cling to outworn methods of primary education? Is there still something good to be had from the fossilized remnants of the last century mode of instruction? Why are our public school teachers incompetent and their work inferior? The answer is not far to seek. It is the fault of a pernicious system of school government, on account of which teachers are selected for their "cheapness," and their "pull" on a "one-man power," not for their worth and merit; which gives good teachers no sustaining help and less hope of reward than poor ones, which makes it practically impossible to discharge poor

teachers, and which has so ingeniously arranged the controlling machinery of the educational work that all responsibility for failure can be shirked by everybody concerned. In many of the schools an unsanitary condition of affairs prevails for which no one in particular is responsible. Overcrowded classes are to be found in basements (of crotty and pretentious structures,) ten or twelve feet below the surface; and for this state of things, no one in particular is responsible, except, perhaps, the architect, who sacrificed internal valuable space, to educate the eye on exterior designs, at the expense of health and intellect. The course of studies too, is not only misleading and preposterous, but highly unscientific and illogical—it is simply a "guy" for the gullible; again, no one in particular is responsible for it. The one fact following would account for much of the evil in present conditions: in no way has those concerned with the educational side of the system a word to say concerning the appointment or discharge of principals or teachers. Nearly all, if not all appointments are made by "pulls" on the "one-man power," merit being a side issue. The sufferers from this state of things are those for whom the hundreds of thousands are appropriated annually—the children.

This is a grievous and mortifying indictment to present to the public, against schools which have had a tenure of some thirty odd years. There is no remedy for present conditions, except in a radical change of system and administration. An outline of the changes which ought and must be made, if the children of Montreal are to receive an education commensurate with its cost, will appear in a future issue. But, until the people rise up in their might and insist upon it, as they are compelled to insist on a new and honest regime in our civic government, no change will be made.

"K."

**YOUTH'S DEPARTMENT.**

**WASHING DAY.**

I'm busy, as you see,  
For this is washing day;  
It's no use calling me,  
I cannot come and play;  
For I must rub and scrub, it's plain,  
The clothing of Victoria Jane.

I've very little soap,  
And soda I have none;  
But yet I live in hope  
That, when my task is done,  
And from work I sit and rest,  
My dolly will be neatly dressed.

How oft to her I say—  
"Wherever you have been?  
Your frock's all over clay!  
Now, can't you keep it clean?  
It sometimes seem to me in vain  
To wash your clothes, Victoria Jane!"

**Three Little Girls.**

Gretchen, Marta and Lena sat upon the doorstep twirling their thumbs in the sun. "Get up, Gretchen, thou lazy bones, the porridge burns while you sit dreaming away; Marta go the barnyard and feed the hungry fowls, who are crying from your neglect; Lena, go fetch the unfinished stockings and knit until the sun sets. You are a pack of shiftless good-for-nothing wenches, who needs must have the idleness beaten out of you."

And with these words, the angry mother lifts from the nail above, a heavy sheepskin lash, with which she beat the bare ankles of her three idle daughters until they howled with pain:  
"Let us run away!" cry Gretchen and Martha and Lena together.

So the three little maidens leave kitchen, and barnyard, and garden, and run away, through the valleys, and over the mountains, until they can no longer see the chimneys of the old, red farm house.

"We are free!" cried the little maidens, dancing until their long braids coil and twist themselves like golden serpents.

Thus they dance and laugh and sing until they come to the banks of a dark, flowing river, near which sits an ugly, dirty, ragged old woman, moaning and wailing as she beats her withered flesh, and tears the gray hairs from her head.

"Prithes, good mother," cry the three little girls in one breath, "why do you beat yourself so cruelly?"

"Alack-a-day, my pretty maidens," cries the old woman, "I beat myself because when I was young like you and shunned honest work, my mother did

not beat the idleness out of me; that is why I am to-day friendless and penniless. Alack-a-day, alack-a-day."

With these doleful words, the old woman resumed her journey, and the three little maidens, turning their faces to the wind, run as fast as they can over mountains and through valleys, until the chimneys of the old farm house come into sight.

"O mother," cried Gretchen and Marta and Lena, running into the bright, fire-lit kitchen, "let us stay with you and learn to make porridge, and feed chickens and knit; we would rather have you beat us now than to have to beat ourselves when we are old."

**HOUSE AND HOUSEHOLD.**

**Daintiness in Woman's Dress.**

There is a sweet sincerity of daintiness in woman's dress in these days of silken linings and hand-wrought lingerie, somehow very much in keeping with the ideal of womanliness. A fine principle is involved in making this hidden part of the gown, the inner silk, more splendid in color, more delicate in material than that which is meant for all the world to see. You can't help thinking that so the inner life is fairer, the heart language purer than that which all the world may know. And besides, this fancy for fine and hand-wrought lingerie, as opposed to shop-made gewgaws elaborately decorated with machine-woven edgings, is reviving again the fine art of needlework. In the old days it was the queen, and her handmaidens who stitched the fine linen. The lady in her tower wrought in wonderful broderies and tracteries on mantles and sleeves the deeds of valor done by her gallant lover and hero. The wife-to-be stitched sweet fancies with her bridal finery, and the mother dreamed fond dreams over the tiny garments she fashioned stitch by stitch. Somehow a man's heart gets very big with protecting tenderness as he watches the deft hands at their pretty feminine work, and he is pretty apt to think, if he doesn't dare to say, fond and foolish things.

**Mothers.**

There appears to be a curious tendency on the part of many men to lavish upon the little ones the affection once exclusively the wife's. A division of demonstration would be both natural and gratifying to the woman, but too often she is ignored in this respect entirely. The boys and girls are joyfully greeted by the home-coming father, while the wife is carelessly nodded at over their sunny heads.

A wise observer once said, "trouble comes with the first baby if it is coming at all." Different ideas of government are often the entering wedge of discussion. The little one sometimes separates father and mother, and at the cradle the husband goes away from the wife in thought and deed just when she needs him most. While she rocks that cradle she thinks deeply, and in the readjustment of her ideas wifehood is merged into the stronger force of motherhood. She demands more of her husband than ever before, because he is a baby's father, and is sometimes disappointed.

In the matter of expenses paterfamilias is apt to be more generous in his allowances for the needs of the children than for the less tangible wants of their mother. He admits that clothes can be outgrown, but is skeptical about their going out of fashion. We are told that a mother becomes unselfish. For herself, yes; but is she not tempted to overlook the claims of others in seeking all good things of her children?

We doubt if the mother, burdened with the care of her child's living and fear of its dying, can half enjoy the beauty *per se* of childhood. The outsider can rejoice in all the loveliness, oftener with more appreciative eyes, because they are not blinded by dread. Heredity, to a conscientious woman, is simply appalling. How can she punish a child for faults inherited by herself? Can she be happy as she notes the growth of a disposition which should, for the good of the race, end with her husband's life? Can she help being afraid when she looks at the little son, who is a pocket edition of the father-in-law in a drunkard's grave? Is it possible, too, for her to discover that her children though gazing at her with her mother's

eyes and speaking to her in the tones of a voice that has made the music of her life, are aliens in thought and deed.

"But," someone says, "I know all that; there are years of patient care and toil—years, perhaps, when the husband and wife go separate ways, one rearing the children, the other going on alone, absorbed in business interests, forgetful of the woman left behind; but when the sons and daughters are grown, matters adjust themselves." Not always. The fair girl graduate becomes the faded little mother's rival, and in the devotion of father and daughter the wife is still left out. It is generally the rough boy, with that warm, loving heart which makes boys so dear the world over, who dimly divines the situation, and with bearish hugs and mammoth paths cheers and sustains the lonely heart. While it lasts it is the sweetest thing, this romance between the mother and her son; but, alas, it is brief! Some dainty little maiden takes the lad captive, and then the jealousy, the acute suffering of that mother's heart, who can fathom?

**CATHOLIC YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY.**

The Catholic Young Men's Society held their usual weekly meeting in the hall, 92 Alexander street, Wednesday evening, Jan. 11th, Mr. J. J. Ryan presiding. Lecture in the Windsor Hall, next St. Patrick's night, by Rev. A. P. Doyle, C. S. P. New York, was announced. Rev. James Callaghan delivered the first of an interesting series of lectures on the "The History of Canada." The rev. gentleman dwelt chiefly on the discoveries of Sebastian Cabot under Henry VII, King of England, and of Verazzani under Francis I, King of France. In 1497 Henry the Seventh, the King of England, commission Sebastian Cabot, a Venetian by birth, to go in search of a north-eastern route to the East Indies. On his way the celebrated Navigator discovered Florida, then Labrador and Newfoundland without landing at any port. France came in later on for her share of glory and for her part in the traffic of codfish, whale and skins of wild beasts. The first official expedition headed by Verazzani, a Florentine mariner, was organized by Francis the First and left Dieppe 1524. The intrepid seaman planted the French flag on every important harbor from Wilmington in North Carolina along the whole of the American coast, Newfoundland, to Cape Breton. Verazzani gave to his territory the name of New France which it preserved for two hundred years. The rev. gentleman in concluding announced his second lecture "Jacques Cartier" for next Wednesday, and called as large an attendance as general to the monthly general Communion of the Association next Sunday morning in behalf of the departed soul of their benefactor, M. P. Ryan.

**ON THE ALPS.**

Far from the haunts of men I'd fly  
To waft me nearer to the sky,  
Where mystic songs, like angels, trills,  
Float round the everlasting hills,

The heart finds here sweet peace and calm,  
For o'er it falls a precious balm—  
The holy dew that God distills  
Upon the everlasting hills.

Here with the lonely edelweiss  
Communing, I would find me bliss,  
Nor pine for rose or daffodils  
Amid the everlasting hills.

For pain and sorrow go to rest  
Soft pillowd on each snowy crest;  
And care no more its chalice fills  
Where rise the everlasting hills.

So let me climb where eagle's soar,  
And dreaming dream for evermore  
Beside the lakes and flashing rills  
That crown the everlasting hills!

EUGENE DAVIS.

Perry Davis' Pain Killer TAKEN INTERNALLY. It relieves *instantly* the most acute pain. USED EXTERNALLY, it is the best Lintment in the world. Its effect is almost instantaneous, affording relief from the most intense pain. It soothes the irritated or inflamed part, and gives quiet and rest to the sufferer. It is eminently the people's friend, and every one should have it with them, or where they can put their hands on it in the dark if need be. Put up in large Bottles.

Wife—"Don't you think this bonnet makes my face look rather short?"  
Husband—"No; but it makes my pocket-book look like a perfect dwarf."