

THE ACADIAN.

WOLFVILLE, N. S., MAR. 5, 1909.

Our readers will be interested in the report of the proceeding of the Council which we publish this week. At the meeting on Wednesday evening the estimates were passed and the rate of taxation fixed for the current year. It will be seen that there is a slight advance over last year, the rate having been put at \$1.70 on the hundred. This, it is expected will pay off all arrears and provide an adequate service in all the departments of the town government. Our rate of taxation is still one of the lowest in the province.

The Game Question.

Mr. Editor,—In response to your request for something on the game question which is at present attracting so much attention, I can do so only from a general standpoint and not so much in criticism of the bills as present before the legislature.

One of the greatest mistakes which grows up people make is to be always thinking and working on this eternal grab question. Some day most of us awake to the sad fact that in the almost universal grab for position and goods, we have lost our health.

We should first of all, slow down to three quarter or half speed, and take part of the time in that pleasant and money making job of plugging up the leaks in our financial car, cultivate health, try to run a 'corner' in fresh air, throw physic to the dogs, and take to the woods whenever possible, and if you think of it ask the rest of the family, if they care to go.

Taking to the woods is a privilege which ought not to be denied to any law abiding man in the country, be he rich or poor, merchant or clerk, farmer or laborer. Health in any of its individuals is always valuable to the state. It may seem strange on first thought that such a life giving process as roughing it in the woods should not be its own reward. But it is any different from other pursuits and pleasures? Do not people study, play games, work, raise big vegetables, etc., largely for the prizes, medals, diplomas, cups and trophies? We strive for some tangible evidence of our activities to show to our admiring friends. And so, while game is not, or should not be, the object of a trip to the woods, it seems to be a natural incentive, leading us to the everlasting springs of health. Nature never calls man to the punching bag or the wall exercises. Her paths are always hatted with pleasures and if we seek these in moderation, health should be our portion.

The Government, then, would be justified in doing far more than it has yet done to protect our game and fish and to keep wild lands open to the public; restriction of course to all reasonable restrictions as might from time to time seem necessary to fully protect owners in their rights to property. More and better inspectors and wardens should be appointed, the amount of game per person in many cases should be reduced, and the sale of all game prohibited. No effort should be spared to promote a healthy public sentiment for the proper preservation of our game and the discouragement of the game hog.

There are places in this hard old world where the game is so thoroughly controlled by individuals and close corporations that a poor common man hardly dare use a fine tooth comb in the day time; and some fear that we in this country, are on the road to the same state of affairs. If we are not, we will be some time if we make no effort to stop, and stop promptly, the encroachments of some of our citizens who, while they may well wish to do right by us perhaps, are certainly laying the foundation for future trouble. Our would be benefactors may know what is good for us better than we ourselves do, but between the two, we prefer to be the subjects of our own mistakes rather than theirs. For remember, that in one short generation all their mistakes become what is generally known as 'vested rights'.

Why should any individual wish to own a salmon pool? If there are fish in his pool, there are fish in the others; and if there are none in the others, there will not be very good fishing in his. It looks more like the thin edge of the wedge and when a company owns the stream and gets laws made to order we are on the straight road to the old country conditions.

Even if they are all good fellows and allow the public in at proper seasons, we must always remember that our rightful privilege is gone, that we have no guarantee and that future holders of our fishing rights may not be actuated by the same solicitude for the good of the people, which is so prominent in the present generation.

What fish and game we now have is at the expense of the whole people. Why should any man or company of men own rights in it? Why does not the man who owns next to the Government farm at Truro, claim all the turkeys he can catch over the fence? Because, our ancestors meddled with the former matter and left the latter to be settled by the moral code of all humanity.

Why should we add more laws to our load ones? We hear of government of the people, by the people for the people, but we still have altogether too much government of the people by our ancestors.

B. L. B.
Mar. 3, '09.

Minister's Librarian, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

As to Religious Instruction.

To the Editor of THE ACADIAN.

DEAR SIR,—My recent letter regarding religious instruction in schools has not, as I hoped and expected, drawn a defence of that institution from any of your readers. But I have been interviewed for further information sufficiently to justify me in writing again and more fully on the subject.

First, however, let me gratify a perfectly legitimate curiosity as to my religious beliefs, which are undeniably at the bottom of the matter. If you must classify me, you are at liberty to call me a Unitarian or thereabouts, in the same sense that some are Baptist or thereabouts. As a farmer it does not take any great moral courage on my part to make my views public. But merchants, men on salaries and others know they must keep within limits or suffer, and even the clergy know what it is to decline the call to Nineveh, though many of them exercise more moral courage in their calling than is usually credited to them. Yet over us all hangs that hoary-headed maxim, "Truth hurts trade."

I am sorry to say it, but there are people who hold that anything is good enough for children, physically, mentally and morally. They lie to them, it being less trouble, until they are old enough to need correct instruction. This being, however, only a minor matter is easily postponed from time to time and the child grows up a product of outside and more enthusiastic instruction, while the 'New Theology' gets the blame.

There is another theory, that the child should be told the truth from the day it asks the first question. Ideas once formed do not have to be reformed, and a child's fundamental ideas of life, which are being laid as early as from six to eight years, are put on a rock foundation.

You can curb curiosity only at heavy cost. I would not hesitate to gratify a request for a taste or a puff of tobacco, the effect is likely to be salutary. The physical system has the power of eliminating a limited amount of poison. Not so the mental system. Give a child a false idea or fairy stories for facts and it is very doubtful if the bad effect on the brain is ever wholly eradicated.

Shall we teach children what we do not ourselves believe? Grown up flatter themselves that they need the services of clergymen skilled in theology; soldiers in the militia must be supplied with chaplains who have been duly initiated into the mysteries of religion; Houses of Parliament, 'lest they forget,' must open daily with prayer by a seasoned man of God. But in the Sunday-school, whosever will, is drafted as instructor; and in our public schools, while every other subject in the curriculum is made a matter for study and examination, we expect the teachers to carry out some kind of religious instruction with absolutely no preparation and not even any enquiry as to their religious opinions, good, bad, or indifferent. Verily! Anything is good enough for children!

No less an authority than the Hon. W. E. Gladstone has said that 'to include religion and exclude dogma is a problem which has not yet (1870) been solved by any state or parliament.' And yet our law forbids the teaching of dogma in public schools. If we admit that Christianity and religion are synonymous terms and all morality is built on the bible, then we must agree with Gladstone, but the generally accepted view now is that Christianity is merely one aspect of a world-wide religious impulse, and Christian morality can now be tracked back through older civilizations for some 4000 years before Moses took much trouble to carve the commandments on those stone tablets.

It is possible for teachers to obey the law by occasionally, as they may feel inclined, discussing before the scholars the subject of religion and morality in the wider sense. If we cannot agree on this, the only common standing ground of all, let parents see to the religious instruction of their children elsewhere. It cannot be seriously argued that a secular school is the proper place for a book over which there has been, and is yet, so much fighting as over the bible. It is not unlikely that our Protestants and Catholics would have agreed long ago on secular schools, with the possible exception of Quebec.

If the former had not insisted on the acceptance of their view which is a slight matter of form without substance.

One of the most important questions now before the people of Great Britain is this same subject of secular schools. The House of Commons is overwhelmingly in favor of them, while the Lords oppose. More than 300 clergymen in that country have the moral courage to come out in favor of secularization.

There has grown up in our schools the custom of bible reading, either by the teacher alone or responsively, and the repetition of a prayer, commonly the Lord's prayer. As to responsive reading, some one has called it a contrivance of the evil one to prevent the performers from getting a connected idea or indeed any other kind of an idea from the matter read. In the Lord's prayer, why should we say 'lead us not into temptation?' I was brought up to believe that Satan had a monopoly of that business and I suppose the error still lingers to cause trouble among the wisest of my little flock.

Teachers in this province are not to have to pass any religious tests before they are granted licenses. And yet, by their orthodox, freethinker, or infidel, they must all go through

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WOLFVILLE, N. S.

the ceremony of reading to the children what they themselves have a perfect right not to believe. No questions allowed, as explanations given, read and let it go at that. The fact that no one ever heard of a scholar asking a question, throws some light on the high moral and religious value of these exercises.

Why should not teachers read and be able to believe it also? Few educated people of to-day do believe the bible as it is read, and our teachers cannot be wholly ignorant of the great problems which are stirring the Christian world to-day. Did you ever notice that when heresy charges crop up in any church, the younger members invariably support the heretic? Now common courtesy always classes our lady teachers as young people. They are then, among those most likely to be affected by modern criticism of the bible.

How can one hold the old views of theology and the bible after an investigation into ancient civilizations preceding the time of Moses, and their influence on scripture writings? Look into the life and character of the Jews, the original number of their sacred writings, their chronology, authorship, contradictions, interpolations, the absolute lack of original copies and the difficulties of translation. Nor must we forget the recent finding of the Hammurabi code. Go over the torments of the bible by majority vote of various councils from 325 A. D. to 1563 A. D. when the Roman Catholic canon was completed and 1647 A. D. when the Protestant bible was finally decided upon as we now have it.

The composite authority for the bible cannot be rationally denied. Among its many authors being self-seeking priests, moral reformers, thoughtful infidels, preachers with some gift of seeing the impending dangers of certain idolatrous practices; one apostle angrily defending himself against his fellow apostles of the Lord; a politician stretching the truth to smooth the troubled waters, and lastly the product of a disordered imagination. One and all not directed into the same general path by an almighty power, but each in very human fashion, proceeding in contradictory ways, according to his own opinions, be they selfish or unselfish, ignorant or thoughtful. No wonder the poet could say:

'Here each his dogma seeks,
'Here each his dogma finds.'

BURKE L. BISHOP.
Greenwich, March 1st, 1909.
(Concluded Next Week.)

Rev. R. F. Dixon, who has been spending some months in England, returned home on Saturday last. He had a very pleasant trip and from appearances appears to have benefited much from his vacation. He took the services at St. John's church last Sunday, and his people were very glad to welcome him back.

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