

Messenger and Visitor

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Horton Academy and our Educational Work.

Principal Brittain of Horton Academy has this summer visited many different sections of the country in the interest of that school. He has been present at as many as possible of our associations and has made good use of the opportunities which have been afforded him of presenting the claims of the Academy to the people. Mr. Brittain is a man of energetic and optimistic spirit, who has the reputation of being an excellent teacher and who, we judge, is generously endowed with that valuable Anglo-Saxon virtue which, for want of good dictionary word, has been dubbed "stick-to-itiveness." The present Principal, however, like his predecessor, finds that, on account of lack of endowment and sufficient equipment, the competition of other schools and apparent indifference on the part of the denomination, the Academy is seriously handicapped, and he feels that, if the school is to live and prosper, the Baptist people of these Provinces must take a more sympathetic and active interest in its welfare.

The Academy, Mr. Brittain thinks, has some claim for consideration because of its age and its record. Established in 1828, it has now completed nearly three-quarters of a century of history. It was founded in the prayers and aspirations of the Baptists of these Provinces when they were but a small and feeble people, and out of their poverty it was generously supported. It has been an important factor in their development. Some 800 persons have completed courses of study in the Academy, besides a considerable number who have spent a longer or shorter period within its walls, and the influences promotive of intellectual and Christian culture thus sent forth to bless the denomination and the world are not to be estimated.

It is contended with much force of argument that the Academy is not less essential in the interest of our educational work now than it has been in the past. It is to be recognized certainly that the establishment of County Academies and other high schools in connection with the public school system has modified the problem as to academic work with which the denomination had to deal seventy-five years ago, or even twenty-five years ago. There are now a large number of schools in the Maritime Provinces at which students can fit for College, and when these are within convenient reach it is but natural that advantage should be taken of the facilities which they afford. But there are many cases in which these schools are not within convenient reach, and even when they are, still, in the fact that Horton Academy is so directly connected with the College, its superior staff of teachers and its location at a centre where intellectual, religious and Baptist influences prevail, there may be considerations strong enough in many instances to induce Baptist parents to incur a little additional expense for the advantage of having their sons fit for College in the Academy at Wolfville. At the present time the Academy is furnishing the College with about half of its matriculates from year to year, and if this feeder were removed it is probable that the number of students entering the College would be sensibly diminished.

To our minds, however, the strongest argument in favor of sustaining and patronizing Horton Academy is not that it is needed as a feeder to the College, but because it can furnish training for a class of students who cannot well take the College course and who do not need to do so. This is a work which the Academy has been and is doing to some extent, and which, with a better equipment, it would be able to do in a much larger and more effective measure. The work done by the Academy in fitting students for matriculation, and by the College in fitting them for the B. A. degree, is worthy of all

praise, and, for so limited an investment of money, it would probably be impossible to find institutions which are able to show more satisfactory results in that direction. But as a denomination we have to recognize the fact that we have not ourselves reaped so largely from this work as we could desire. We have educated many men for the ministry, for law and medicine and other professions, a large proportion of whom have gone from us and are giving their cultured strength to enrich a neighboring nation, but our own men who stay with us, to till the soil and to promote the various industries of the country, have felt but to a comparatively slight degree any direct influence from our schools. While we have been cultivating the vineyards of other people, we have too much neglected our own. It has been thought that for Baptist parents to educate their sons at Acadia, making large pecuniary sacrifices to do so, was a most praiseworthy thing. This may be so,—and yet, when one sees a whole family of boys thus educated and all gone out of the country, one cannot but feel that the result leaves something to be desired in the interests of the denomination here and of our own land.

We have been pleased, therefore, to hear Principal Brittain advocating the interests of Horton Academy as a school which is well adapted to supply the needs indicated in the preceding paragraph,—a school which, with adequate equipment, would be prepared not to educate men away from ordinary industrial pursuits and send them out of the country, but which would fit them for more intelligent and successful work at home, in agriculture and horticulture, in trade and commerce, and all mechanical and manual industries, and which at the same time would give them literary culture of great value, and all under influences distinctively Christian and Baptist in character. Very great and obvious advantages would increasingly result to the denomination from having a large number of its young men educated at Horton Academy, with that school strengthened and equipped as it should be for its work. Besides the direct advantages of school training, there would be indirect benefits of the greatest value,—the forming of helpful associations and life-long friendships; the inspiration gained by contact with thinking men and by touching the denomination at its educational centre and feeling the beat of its pulse as it can be felt nowhere else,—all which must tend to the gaining of higher ideals and the ability to realize them. What we need is a diffusion of education, so that the educated man who tills the soil, for instance, shall not feel that he is alone. What makes it hard for an educated man to be a farmer is not so much the hardness or the unpleasantness of the toil which it involves, but that to so great a degree it cuts him off from association with educated men. He needs intellectual fellowship. Give him neighbors who can think his thoughts, sympathize with his ideals and help him to realize them, and a new world will be created for him.

This article we find is outgrowing reasonable limits of space and we must cut it short here. But we desire to commend to our people, and especially to those who are guiding our educational policy and work, the claims which Horton Academy, and the Academical work as such, has to consideration.

The Man Born Blind.

There are some lessons of great importance connected with the story of the healing of the man born blind, which affords the topic for our Bible study of the current week.

In the first place we are taught not to conclude hastily that any affliction under which a man or a community may be suffering is a penalty for the personal and particular sins of those thus afflicted. In a broad and general sense, it may be said that human suffering is the result of sin,—that is to say, it is the result of the transgression—either wilful or ignorant—of some law of God in one or other realm of his universe. But we shall be going much too fast and too far if we declare, in reference to afflictions which have no perceivable connection with the conduct of those who suffer, that they indicate the special displeasure of God upon the afflicted. And there is evidently a disposition in men toward such hasty judgment. It manifests itself especially among heathen and barbarous peoples, by whom every misfortune and calamity is apt to be regarded

as an expression of the wrath of the gods or the malevolent power of evil spirits. Such a disposition is found too among peoples of larger culture. The friends of Job felt obliged to regard the afflictions by which they saw him overwhelmed as a result and a demonstration of grievous sins. The Book of Job, it is true, teaches the erroneousness of such deductions, but the question of the disciples, in the passage under consideration, is only one indication of many that among the Jews such cases were commonly regarded as special marks of God's displeasure upon the sufferer or those immediately connected with him. In this instance, as in his remarks respecting those upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and those whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, our Lord takes pains to correct this false notion in respect to God's dealings with mankind. Yet even in the Christianity of this age there survives a good deal of the old heathen fallacy, that every calamity which befalls is to be interpreted as a mark of God's displeasure upon those who suffer.

We have here also the lesson—a most important one—that the great work of Christ's disciples is not to explain, or to speculate upon, the mystery of human suffering, but, as far as possible, to relieve it. In this man born blind, the disciples saw a subject for fruitless speculation; the Master saw an opportunity and heard a call to perform a work of love. It is this attitude of mind and heart that Jesus would encourage in his disciples. He would have them consider that, though sin and suffering abound in this world, the grace of God does also abound for the healing and redemption of mankind. And this man born blind—now when his eyes are opened—can he not even rejoice that he was born as he was, that he might know this wonderful experience of the gracious power of God, which has come to him through his affliction? And may it not be worth more than all it costs for this sinful world to pass through its terrible baptism of suffering, if having felt the healing touch of the Crucified Redeemer, it shall respond to his love and reflect his glory to a degree wholly impossible in a world into which sin had never entered? But let us consider that in the world today are many millions of blind men—men blind from birth, who sit and beg,—and the question for us who call ourselves followers of Christ to ponder is—Are we fulfilling toward these the commission of our Master, are we working the works of Him who sent us while it is yet day? Are the Christians of this generation using their powers and opportunities as ministers of the grace of God, to help those who, in their blindness and beggary, wait for the touch of a divine and healing hand?

The opening of this blind man's eyes was a great event for him. How wonderful it must be for a man who has never seen to receive all at once the marvellous faculty of sight! With some glimmering of hope in his heart, but outwardly all in darkness, he had groped his way or had been led by some friendly hand to the pool of Siloam. But how different to him was the world through which he passed as he returned! Yet it was in reality the same world. And when a man's spiritual eyes are opened, he looks forth into a world which has been made new to him—a world radiant with the love of God. One of our own ministers—now grown aged in the service of his Lord—has told how, when he was converted, it was as if one sun rose in the east, and another in the west, and another in the north, and another in the south, and all the world seemed full of the glory of God. No wonder the people who had known this blind man of the lesson as one who had sat and begged were in doubt whether or not this man, rejoicing in the gift of sight, was the same. There was of course a different look on the man's face, because he was alert to the world around him as he had never before been. He was no longer the helpless beggar, but was able to take his place and do his part with others. When a man's eyes are opened to behold the things of the spiritual world, there must be a change. Men ought to be able to perceive a new look upon his face, a new power in his life. And they who have been healed should know more about themselves than others can tell. This man who was born blind was able to tell the Pharisees one thing very distinctly, namely this—that, "whereas I was blind, now I see." He could tell them, too, who it was who had healed him, and could not be persuaded that he who had done so great things for him was not worthy of his gratitude and adoration.

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