

to using, like the carpenter, the more convenient system of duodecimals.

These are examples of the facts which tend to show that man's early way of counting was upon his fingers; as Massieu, the Abbé Sicard's celebrated deaf and dumb pupil, records in describing recollections of his yet uneducated childhood: "I knew the numbers before my instruction; my fingers had taught me them. I did not know the ciphers. I counted on my fingers." Among the lower races, the use of word language has only to a small extent encroached upon gesture language in counting; among races above these, numeral words are more largely used but preserve evident traces of a growth out of gesture counting; while among the higher peoples, though language gives little trace of the original signification of numerals, there still prevails the system of counting by fives, tens, and twenties, of which we can hardly doubt that the form is given by the arrangement of the fingers and toes. Thus it appears that in the mental history of mankind we may see back to a condition so much lower than our own, that the numerals, which we look upon as so settled a part of speech that we use them as one of the first tests of the common derivation of languages, were still unspoken, and their purpose was served by the ruder, visible signs which belong to the department of gesture.—*Smithsonian Report*.

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#### NIGHT SCHOOLS

#### *Or the Education of the Adult Village Labourer.*

(BY M. O'GRADY.)

At our last congress our respected chairman, at the conclusion of his opening address, expressed a hope that something would be heard on the desirability of night schools; but, as nothing was then or there said on the subject, I have thought proper to write this essay upon it, in the hope, if you do not think it worthy your consideration, that you will award to the writer that to which he only aspires—the credit of a good intention.—As the education of the humbler classes enriches the mass of society, what better use can be made of wealth than to multiply the rational and innocent pleasures of the poorer classes, to improve their taste and to elevate their character? To do this, it appears to me that no more effectual means could be adopted than the establishment of night schools. We know that the education of the adult laborers and tradesmen has occasionally received a little public attention. Many educationists and philanthropists have grappled with the subject, both through the agency of the press, and by practically organizing and conducting evening schools. The instances which have proved successful are much fewer than might be expected—a fact which must excite astonishment when it is considered that the attempts have been almost confined to large and populous towns. Only a few isolated attempts have been made to establish village evening schools, or any other means by which the adult labourer, no matter how well inclined, could turn from the tilling of the soil to the cultivation of his mind, and thus raise his condition as an intellectual being. The merest rudiments of literary or scientific knowledge confer on man great benefits. Even the ability to read, opens up new channels of rational employment to the mind by limiting the temptations that bestrew the paths of the laboring multitudes. When the seeds of knowledge are sown amongst them, they are sure to burst the bonds that fetter them to ignorance. The smallest amount of education opens avenues to employment on which the uneducated mind can never enter; and the mind of the artizan or labourer having once gained access to the knowledge contained in books, can always find employment for his leisure hours, which will tend to ameliorate his condition. The more the mind is exercised the stronger it becomes. The more knowledge is acquired the more the capacity and facilities of knowledge are increased. The more the

taste for intellectual pleasures is cultivated the less likely is man to become the slave of his lower appetites and passions. Then what a great gain will it always prove to the labouring classes, if labour can be something more than mere mechanical drudgery and toil!

Whilst you will fully subscribe to these sentiments I know you will also feel that powerful barriers impede the labours of the educationist in his endeavours to instruct the adult labouring man; and that you are anxious that in cities, towns, and villages, much should be done—indeed that everything should be done which can be done—to educate and elevate them. I know you wish they should be treated, not as they are too often treated, as mere animals and machines, to be used and applied as masters and employers have the power and inclinations to use and apply them, but as beings who have minds as well as bodies—minds destined to be immortal; and who should be rendered capable of self-direction. I know you do not think that their duty would be less faithfully, because more intelligently, performed; and that, in order to see such carried out, I believe you would rejoice to see the best means adopted, which, to me, appears to be the universal establishment of evening schools in this country. I shall now venture to trace the indifferent success of most of the evening schools that have been established, and suggest a remedy. Foremost stands the want of either support or sympathy from any influential persons, and second, the principles on which they were conducted.

The clergyman, the landlord, the agent, the Board of National Education, and others could, by their united influence, render signal service to the movement. It appears to me that evening schools, in order to be at all successful, must be conducted on principles totally different from ordinary schools.

We know that a social reform cannot be effected in the adult sons of toil, by attempting to afford them systematic class instruction. A taste for literature cannot be engrafted on a mind whose ideas have been already shaped. The former cannot be accomplished without the combined agency of various social measures, and the latter naturally comes within the province of early education. But though we should recommend that the friends of education should concentrate their energies on the young mind, yet we believe that much service may be rendered to the adult population by judicious efforts, and that these efforts will prove successful in proportion as the ordinary class instruction is judiciously dispensed with.

The agricultural mind is still at a low ebb, it must be raised by gradual and continual exertion, and improved culture, before it can be capable of taking advantage of such means of instruction as would be offered it through classes. For many, at first, I know no means so likely to arouse them and draw their attention to better things, as simple and interesting lectures on *common things*, at first explaining principles and their application, and showing how much philosophy there is, and how much skill there ought to be, in the most common and ordinary processes of life. You know if we wish to raise up ignorance, we must descend to it. We must gather up and foster the mutual affinities and sympathies of humble life, and enlist them on our side. We must give prominence to the reasonableness and practicability of the truths and principles we would impress upon the minds of those whom we wish to raise.

To any person who reflects on the toil, and consequent fatigue of the working man, it must be evident that he cannot be expected to forego recreation, and spend several hours at the desk of an evening school. For him it should be our great object to popularize and sweeten knowledge, in order that he may be induced to come, and allay a thirst which his mind must feel. It becomes necessary to do this else he is in danger of falling a victim to the village alehouse, the rustic gambling table, or perhaps degraded associates. If the state incur the trouble and expense of giving him an early education, she must second it by supplying intellectual food; she cannot negative the taste she has created, and hence the necessity for the library and evening schools.