

From mountain-crest or land-locked vale, or
ocean's misty isles—

In Indian or Australian wilds, in China or Japan,
Yea, in the Madagascar swamps, the Brothers
lead the van;

The while, within their classic halls pure Faith
and Science meet,

The New World brings her myriad sons to study
at their feet."

Everywhere the brothers have borne with them the methods of teaching bequeathed to them by their venerable founder, and in every land the leading educators have bestowed the highest encomiums upon that grand old system of public instruction that for two long centuries has seemed to stand "the crucial test of time." I say *seemed* because of late, three very enlightened men of the very enlightened Province of Ontario, have discovered and made known to the world, that "as regards the purpose of education and the means of securing it, the Brothers are not familiar with modern methods of teaching." Just how the Commissioners have arrived at this conclusion is a mystery to every logical mind. That the Brothers' schools in Ottawa were not up to the standard, that some of the teachers were inefficient, may or may not be true. But granted for the sake of argument, that the facts were exactly as represented in the report; were the Commissioners authorized to formulate therefrom a sweeping condemnation of the educational methods of La Salle? Not in the least. A system of education is not a press-the-button-and-I'll-do-the-rest machine that may be set in motion equally well by the initiated or the uninitiated, but a union of principles to be applied in teaching, to be translated into practice by individual teachers. These teachers will be more or less faithful in their translation according as they are more or less imbued with the spirit of the system that they profess, and hence a teacher may prove himself altogether inefficient even under the best system of education, simply because he happens to be a bad translator of the principles given for his guidance. Consequently, the inefficiency of several teachers or of a whole set of teachers is not sufficient in itself to prove the inefficiency of the system they profess; nay, even if several schools of the *same locality* in charge of several separate communities of a world-embracing Society

like that of the Christian Brothers, should fall below the required standard, this fact does not furnish sufficient data upon which to base a general, unrestricted, absolute condemnation of the Brothers and their methods. But the judgment passed by the Commissioners is not only an illogical sequence from doubtful premises. It is a conclusion false in itself as I shall endeavor to show in the following pages. And lest it may seem to savor of presumption, nay of temerity, on my part, that I should dare to question the truth of the accusations formulated by such a competent body as the Ontario Commission against the Christian Brothers, let me here disclaim any presumptuous pretensions of what kind-soever, for

I speak not to disprove what (the Commission) spoke,

But here I am to speak what I do know,

to speak what every man not wholly ignorant of the history of education should know, in regard to the Brothers of the Christian Schools and their methods of imparting knowledge to the young.

And in the first place what are the deficiencies implicitly imputed to the system of La Salle by the general condemnation pronounced by the Commissioners, that "as regards the purpose of education and the means of securing it, the Brothers are not familiar with modern methods of teaching"? Two principally, as may be gleaned from the report: (1) that under the system of La Salle, the pupils are not taught to reason, and (2) that the said system is behind the present age.

"The reasoning powers are not exercised." So says Mr. Scott. So, likewise, say his fellow Commissioners. And yet nothing is more frequently repeated, nothing more seriously inculcated in the writings of La Salle, than the necessity of developing the reasoning powers of the young. His repetition of this essential point of education recurs so often in his *Meditations* for the Brothers and in his *Government of Christian Schools*, as to become almost monotonous. He lays down, for instance, as fundamental principles of his system: * (1) "We should

* The following quotations are taken from "De La Salle and his Methods" by a Director of a Normal School. Paris, *passim*.