

OPINIONS ON LOVELL'S GENERAL GEOGRAPHY.

From William Tassie, Esq., M.A., Principal of the Galt Grammar School.

I have much pleasure in bearing testimony to the excellence of "Lovell's General Geography," the advance sheets of which have been forwarded to me. It supplies a want which has long been felt in Canadian Schools, and is, I conceive, specially adapted to the youth of British North America. I have no hesitation in saying that the work must come into general use in our Schools.

WILLIAM TASSIE.

Galt, 10th May, 1861.

From Rotus Parmalee, Esq., Inspector of Schools in the Eastern Townships.

WATERLOO, C.E., 27th February, 1861.

SIR,—I have great pleasure in acknowledging the receipt of the advance sheets of your "General Geography," and in expressing the satisfaction I have experienced from the cursory perusal of them only that my leisure has as yet permitted.

In general terms, I would express the opinion that you have hit upon the just medium between the prolixity of history and the conciseness of mere tabular statistics. It contains the general principles of Geography, and enough of description to suit the requirements of Schools; and the prominence given to *our own country* is a feature that specially commends it for use in Canadian Schools.

Allow me to suggest one addition, which, if you should agree with me in opinion as to its usefulness, may perhaps yet be supplied: I mean *statistics of population*. This information, it appears to me, cannot so fitly be given in any other work of ready access; and the "General Geography" needs only this addition to make it complete.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient humble servant,

Mr. John Lovell, Montreal.

ROTUS PARMALEE.

• *From Fennings Taylor, Esq., Clerk Assistant, Legislative Council.*

QUEBEC, 15th April, 1861.

MY DEAR SIR,—In returning you my thanks for the Advance Sheets of your "General Geography," which you have been kind enough to send me, I take the opportunity of expressing my hope that the public will not be the only party to derive benefit from your valuable contribution to what, I trust, may prove *The British American Series of School Books*. "To deserve success," has been with you a principle of exertion, and though your reward may not in all cases have been equal to your desert, yet I am sanguine enough to believe that your new enterprise, combining, as it does, commercial with national considerations, will prove to be as satisfactory to yourself as it should be acceptable to the community.

Without referring particularly to the mechanical attractions of an undertaking, whose merits are sufficiently apparent, or affecting to criticize maps, the accuracy of which can only be tested by a practical geographer, I may mention that your Geography is well adapted to supply a want that has been much spoken of, and occupy a place in our school literature, which, hitherto, has been but indifferently filled.

Nor can I withhold the expression of my admiration at the manner in which the duties of Author have been discharged. Mr. Hodgins, it is true, needs no man's praise; his zeal and service in the cause of Education are felt and admitted by all. Still the General Geography is not an ordinary book, undertaken for ordinary purposes. On the contrary, it represents immense labour, loyally bestowed, and high aims patriotically advanced. The learned Author, it is true, speaks lightly of his own toil. The labour, so ungrudgingly given, is a "work of love." The object so faithfully carried out is a matter of duty. The value of the book, however, is not impaired by the modesty of the allusion. It appeals to us on its merits, and there is but one answer to the appeal. We must cherish and appreciate a work which has been so carefully adapted to our tastes, and suited to our wants. We must applaud and be grateful to a writer who possessed the genius and ability to discern what we required, as well as the industry and zeal to give us what he discerned.

Those of us who have had an English school-boy's experience will probably remember, that, in the elementary portion of our education, Geography and History were kept tolerably distinct, and approached us, so to speak, in a different clothing, and that the Atlas, however necessary to the correct apprehension of the sister sciences, was usually bound in a separate volume, and used indifferently in either class.

On this continent, the old English plan has been somewhat departed from. With characteristic regard to economy, our American neighbours have sought in their school system to mix many things together. They seem to be of opinion that the youth of the Republic should arrive with railway celerity at the terminus of their school course, and lose no time in assuming the duties of citizenship. Thus we find that the elementary Atlas is bound up with the historical and geographical primers. The maps, too frequently evincing a suggestive indifference on the subject of boundaries albeit colored to the tone of effrontery, are placed in printed frameworks of doubtful morals, and fabulous chronology; and these again are interleaved with commentaries, either personal or general, that do violence alike to our history and traditions as British subjects.

This, however, is no new complaint. Until the introduction of the present educational system, the Common Schools of Western Canada were almost entirely supplied with books compiled by American authors, published by American printers, and for the most part taught by American school teachers. Thus the mind of our youth was early subjected to foreign influences, its loyalty was exposed to a two-fold danger, for right and wrong in matters political were determined by a standard unknown to the Royal rule. The heroes of our common school books were for the most part of the American Revolutionary type, while the subjects were represented as of the British race. Books and Teachers concurred in presenting

only one side of history, and that side in masquerade, and said nothing of the noble race of men, the founders of Western Canada, who, amidst hardships, privations, and defeat, were faithful to their Country, their Sovereign, and their oaths.

Next to the selection of exemplary teachers, it is desirable that the school books should be not only well chosen, but national in their tone and teaching. Your General Geography is a valuable contribution in the right direction. It gives due prominence to the Colonial Possessions of the British crown, and is particularly full in its descriptions of the North American Provinces. You have sought to produce, and I think you have succeeded in producing, a school book precisely suited to British America.

It is much to be desired that one school system could permeate all these Provinces. Might not Canada, without the charge of presumption, properly assume the initiative in this matter? Might she not, from her Normal and Model Schools, send out well trained teachers, who, by pursuing a uniform system of instruction, would implant in the mind of our youth the germ of a true and loyal nationality? Thus knowledge and experience might be made to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, our youth would be taught to cherish enlarged views of their country, and being early made familiar with its history and proportions, they would learn to comprehend and appreciate the statesman's dream of a united future, which we believe will be the heritage, as it is the hope, of the MONARCHISTS OF AMERICA.

At the commencement of this letter, I expressed the wish that your General Geography should be regarded as the pioneer of a new series of School Books for British America. Before I close, I venture to suggest that it ought to be followed by a History of the Provinces, as complete as the Geography. In speaking of a History for youth, I do not mean that such a work should be a decoction merely of diluted Blue Books, with views, tabular and statistical, of the rate at which civilization has advanced, and the wilderness retired. Such particulars, however important they may be, make but little impression on the fervid mind of youth. They do not touch his heart, while they altogether miss his imagination and fancy. Had we no materials wherewith to lighten the sterner history of our progress, then of course nothing could be said; but such is not the case. The narrative of the early French colonization, with its wonderful accompaniments of chivalrous adventure and missionary zeal, have their place in history, and belong chiefly to Eastern Canada. Yet we should not forget that the life story of her sister province is neither less alluring nor less heroic. Upper Canada is marked with the footprints of faithfulness and devotion. The vestiges of moral and patriotic worth lie scattered about the land. Imperfect they must be, for, like the inscriptions on broken grave stones, time has destroyed some, obscured others, and defaced all. Still they are worthy of being gathered together, worthy of being patiently studied as the moral relics of a race, which it is to be feared has no counterpart now. Let the hoar and moss of years be reverently removed. Let the writer of History examine whatever remains of record, and carefully decipher whatever appears to be obscure. Let him seek the representatives of the earlier days, and listen kindly to old tales of bye-gone times, for we may be sure the traditions he may thus gather will help to perfect the record of events, which connects the present with the past. Then, perchance, we shall understand aright the principles and character of the "United Empire Loyalists,"—of a race of men who, rather than bow down to the Republican idol which their countrymen had set up, abandoned their possessions and forsook their kindred, to become the founders of a colony, whose creation it is no exaggeration to say was the offspring of sentiment and devotion,—a Monarch's tribute to his subjects' faith.

I am, my dear Sir, faithfully yours,

Mr. John Lovell, Montreal.

FENNINGS TAYLOR.

From Thomas M. Taylor, Esq.

MONTREAL, 26th February, 1861.

DEAR SIR,—I have had much pleasure in looking over the advance sheets of your "General Geography," which you were good enough to send to me.

I cannot pretend to consider myself an authority on matters of educational literature, but, as you desire opinions, I have no hesitation in saying that I think the work an excellent one, both in plan and execution, and well fitted to supply a place which I have understood to be void among school books. Nor can it fail, combining, as it does, so much of the Gazetteer with the Geography, to be valued for reference.

The completeness, with conciseness, of the information it affords must commend it, and your avoidance of the too common mistake of giving too much space to particular sections of the earth, to the equal neglect of others just as important, should secure for it general confidence and acceptance.

For the sake of the youth of our country, I wish it large circulation, and for your sake, as its enterprising and almost adventurous publisher, I wish it commercial success.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. John Lovell, Publisher.

THOMAS M. TAYLOR.

From Richard Nettle, Esq., Superintendent of Fisheries for Lower Canada.

* QUEBEC, 2nd March, 1861.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your "General Geography." I have carefully examined it, and I have much pleasure in stating that I have never seen a work better adapted for the use of educational institutions. You have now supplied a want that has long been felt by all professors and persons engaged in tuition, and I hope soon to see it in general use.

Very truly yours,

Mr. John Lovell, Montreal.

RICHARD NETTLE.