

Somewhere else, for school wasn't enticing—

Webster's Spelling Book book of the past,
When we'd read it for five or six winters
Began to grow tedious at last.

You march to your seats like soldiers
With musical tread on the floor;
We came in through the open window,
If nearer our seat than the door.

You study French, Latin and German,
Sometimes even *English* you try,
You know all about the old pagans,
Can measure the earth and the sky;

We read, then we wrote, then we ciphered,
And if after that there was lack,
Our cultivation was varied
Between the mind and the back.

Your teachers are models of mercy,
Their mandates engender no fear;
To us half a dozen young earthquakes
Were lurking in: "Geordie, come here!"

You "watch-chain" and "cano" your teachers,
In hopes of prolonging their stay;
We'd a very different object,
And a very different way.

You've written examinations,
With infinite worry and fuss;
We followed an easier method—
'Twas bigness that promoted us.

Yes, boys, there's a change in "larnin"
(As we called it), manner and rule,
Since the men who now are your fathers
Were youngsters and went to school.

Ah! that little log-house on the hillside
I see it in memory yet;
And I think of the scholars departed
With a sigh that is half of regret.

On its old batten-door our jackknives
Carved our names (our only renown).
One third of the letters turned backwards,
The rest of them upside down.

We each took our turn building fires;
Before half the lessons were through,
'Twas a very poor morning for whipping,
If we didn't take turns at that, too.

Old Benjamin Brown was the master,
We prayed for him every day,
And fathomed how justice and mercy
Can temper a raw-hide at play.

His brows jutted out in their fierceness
The width of a pigeon's wing;
His eyes were like unchained bull-dogs
Forever ready to spring.

His nose, a crushed strawberry color;
Stood sentinel over a smile
That took on the look of an angel's
Whenever he caught us in guile.

When school was called in after dinner
He'd doze with his shoulders bowed;
And this was always a signal
That scholars might study aloud.

I still hear that wonderful cadence
That swelled, and sank, and roso,
Till the noise broke the thread of his slumbers,
Or a fly settled down on his nose.

One day when the door he had bolted
And warmly demanded our stay;
We bolted the nearest window
And promised to stay—away:

He followed us out of the window,
We sprang in and fastened it down;
And the maddest man in the coun'y
Was schoolmaster Benjamin Brown.

In vain were his threats, his fury;
The door never yielded a pin;
Till he'd promised us full and free pardon
We still held the fort from within.

* * * * *
The sheep and the goats of his pasture
Are scattered; the house on the hill
Is falling away into ruins—
It's used for a sheep-pen still.

In an old-fashioned church-yard near it
The master is taking his rest—
"Ben. Brown" at the top of the head-stone,
Beneath it, "He did his best."

Good-bye to the flickering fancies,
The friendships and laughter and groans,
Good-bye to the dear old master—
Requiescat in pace, his bones!

* * * * *
When I think of the past and the present,
Our chance and improvident heed,
Your chances and means of improvement—
You ought to be happy indeed.

Correspondence.

To the Editor of THE CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL.

SIR,—I would like to say a little in reply to the communication from an "Acadian School M.'am" which appeared in the "Journal" of October. I have taught for a number of years in Country Schools and have never had the trouble of "*Please master CAN I go out?*" or with "*Please Sir I HAIN'T got NO pencil?*" My pupils understand that recess is given for the purpose of *drinking*, having a *short game*, preparing for the next eighty or ninety minutes work, etc. If they wish to borrow any book or *pencil*, or if they wish to sharpen pencils, it is to be done at recess. Then if any pupils wish to retire from the room during the working hours, they may do so, (one at a time, and not remain out an unreasonable length of time) providing they lose a recess each time, unless it be for sickness (which rarely happens). But their retiring is not to interfere with any recitation.