

# The Perils of School Life

(By a Regular Contributor.)

Last week we referred to the boy or girl at home, in tender years, and still under the direct control of parents. We will now follow the young person a step farther. The time has come, no matter what the boy's age (we will speak of boys, although the same remarks apply equally to girls), when he must be sent to school. Parents can no longer, in justice to the young life in their hands, retain him at home. They are incapable of imparting that instruction which is an indispensable part of education. Not that they may be devoid of the knowledge, or of the aptitude of imparting the same, but because their duties in life forbid that they become teachers; they have neither the time, nor the proper means to educate their son. They must send him to a school; they must hand him over to the care of persons whose profession it is to train the youth. We suppose the question of the boy's age, health and ability to endure study is settled and it is desirable that he should at once commence his elementary education. The first question which arises, and it is one of such importance that we will deal entirely with it in this issue, is that of selecting a school.

Before choosing the school there are three considerations that must not be overlooked. We will not stop to dwell upon the consideration of the locality; that is a matter of purely local or individual importance. Whether the boy is to be sent to a school three streets away or to one a mile off, is not a matter for us to here discuss. Of course, the nearer the school to the home the better for both pupil and parents. But it often happens that a school at a certain distance is superior in many ways to the one next door; in which case it is preferable to understand the inconvenience of distance than to lose the advantages of an educational character that present themselves. This, however, is a matter for parents to calculate between themselves, and upon which it is not easy for us to give any advice. It is with the other three considerations that we have to do.

Religion — including faith and morals — educational advantages, and physical health are the three considerations that we claim parents should fully weigh and measure before selecting the school for their boy.

As far as religion is concerned we do not think there can be two opinions in any Catholic mind. For the sake of the Faith that the boy has received and of the morals that he should have inculcated in his young life, it must be a Catholic school. Let no person come to us with the argument that a better or a higher education is imparted in Protestant schools. As a matter of fact such

not the case. The first object of life the one grand and all-embracing aim of human existence is the salvation of the soul; and that depends upon both the religious principles imparted and the moral moulding of the character. Outside the walls of a Catholic school the boy can learn almost nothing about his religion, and less about his moral obligations. There is that in the teachings of the Catholic Church which cannot be obtained elsewhere. Consequently, if the parents desire that the son should inherit their spirit of faith and their code of morals they must absolutely send him to a Catholic school. We can admit of no compromise upon this point.

In regard to the second consideration, that of the respective educational advantages afforded by different Catholic schools, there are many issues before us. There are degrees of excellence in Catholic educational establishments, and some offer facilities that others cannot afford. But, like in the matter of locality, this is a point upon which we cannot give any special advice. This question must be settled with a view to the special circumstances of each case. For example, if you wish to have your son learn only the rudiments, just sufficient to enable him to keep above the common level in ordinary work-a-day life; or if you have not the means to have him progress any further in his education, there is scarcely any great choice to be made; one good Catholic school will do the work, as well as another one. If you wish him to have a simple commercial education, do not send him to a classical college; it would be a loss of time and money. If you want him to rise higher and prepare for some liberal profession, you must not allow him to squander all his time in a commercial institution. But all this depends upon the circumstances in each case.

There is finally the consideration of the boy's physical health. We have already given some hints on this point, as far as regards the over-taxing of a young mind; but there are equally important matters to turn over in the mind. There are schools that lack all the sanitary qualities of others; there are schools that are overcrowded; others are in unhealthy localities; others have no well ventilated; others have no physical exercise facilities. Then there are schools that are perfectly lighted, aired, and drained, in which the space is ample and the surroundings are cheerful. Of these we have not a few amongst our Catholic schools in Montreal. Again there are schools wherein drill and other physical developing methods are in practice. Some schools have their large playgrounds, their gymnasiums, their exercise rooms, and all the facilities required for the due and proper development of the body in conjunction with the improvement of the mind. Again we are not in a position to offer special advice, much less to discriminate. But we advise the parents to see that the school of their choice neglects neither the soul, the mind, nor the body of the pupil. This is of vital interest, for there is always truth in the old Roman maxims, and there is a great deal of it in the one that advocates "a sound mind in a sound body."

idea of human happiness is not quite in accordance with the views of the materialist; who do not regard the possession of hoarded treasures or the superabundance of the luxuries of life as the highest object of a man's ambition, and amongst those human beings the Celt is of that nature, passionate, adventurous, intrepid, never content to lie dormant on the earth, but fleeing on the wings of Heaven, always in search of higher things, by nature allotted to the realms of the fanciful and ethereal spirit-loving, easily led away by the subtle enchantments of poetry and music, chivalrous to the highest degree when confronted by any obstacles which would debar him from the pursuit of the dreams of his fancy. This is, perhaps, the grand characteristic of the Celt which marks him off from the Teuton, his finely strung spiritual nature, which spurns the shackles of sense and desires to look beyond the world, no matter how much the fortunes of this world may favor him. And where will an Irishman find that spirituality, his unalienable birth-right, flourishing to the same extent as in Ireland where the atmosphere breathes of prayerfulness, where, as St. Columbkille sang, well nigh fourteen centuries ago, "The young are so gentle and the old so mild." Yes, seated beside the old fireside, listening to the old Gaelic accents as they fall from the lips of the Irish peasants, listening to that conversation so pure and free from taint of anything coarse, you realize that there, in that social life, is centered the attraction which draws the Irish wherever scattered, which makes them ever feel like the immortal Goldsmith—

"In all my wanderings round this world of care,  
In all my griefs—and God has given me share,  
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown  
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down  
To husband out life's taper at the close  
And keep the flame from wasting by repose,  
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,  
Amidst the swains to show my well-learned skill.  
Around my fire an evening group to draw  
And tell of all I felt and all I saw  
And as a hare whom hounds and horns pursue,  
Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,  
I still had hopes my long benations past  
Here to return—and die at home at last."

But like many another Irishman, whose ashes are smoldering in foreign cemeteries, Goldsmith did not die at home. He sleeps his last long sleep in the quiet cloisters of the Temple Bar in London. Still, I am sure, it was the fondest wish of his heart to be laid to rest in his own sweet Lissoy, among the scenes that his "Deserted Village" so beautifully depicts.

It is the memories connected with the social life in Ireland, then, it can be truly said, that have ever riveted Irishmen the whole world over, by ties more powerful than steel, to their beautiful country. Could not the old fairy dells, the green hill-sides, the magic streamlets that play so gracefully down the verdant slopes of heather-covered mountains, and more than all that each of those places possessed, of a history artfully told by the old Seanachies, congregated around the peat fires on the winter's night arouse interest, if not sympathy, in the mind of the most stolid member of the human family that ever breathed God's air, or basked in God's sunshine. Oh, it is sweet to dwell in Ireland! There is music in the winds that play around the old fairy paths, the ancient habitations of Ferbolg or Tuatha-de-Danaan. There is a melancholy pleasure in the rustle of the breeze amongst the green ivy that decorates the castles which stud the land, now roofless, tenantless, yet once the scene of high-sounding cheer, where the council boards determined measures regarding war and peace.

A passion for home seems to be in a particular manner a social virtue of the Irish race. The thought of the thatched cabin and the old mother sitting within, murmuring in the language of other days the verses that lulled to rest baby forms, now arrived at manhood's prime, is ever present to the Irishman, and that passionate attachment no lapse of moons can weaken, no change of scenes obliterate. It is imprinted indelibly on his heart, and although among strangers it is always more or less concealed, yet, as soon as the occasion offers itself, as soon as any question regarding Ireland is mooted, then the Irishman gives vent to his feelings, and you can thoroughly realize with what ardor he longs for the old spot where his

footsteps wandered in the days of his youth. It was this deep abiding spirit of home the stolid English invaders forgot when they freighted the transport ships with thousands of Irish men and women and sent them forth to perish of fever in the fetid holds of emigrant vessels and be consigned to woe-filled graves, or be swallowed up in the large and populous cities and become so infatuated with their surroundings as to never cast once a glance on the ill-starred land they had left behind. But the spiritual instinct of home was not to be uprooted out of the Irish heart, and the young Irishman and the blithe Irish maiden from their hard earned pennies have never forgotten the necessities of the poor old mother praying for her banished children in the mountain cot at home.

It is a great and grand characteristic, one of the many noble traits of the proud Celtic nature, attachment to home. For many children of the persecuted Gael, it is many a year since they gazed on the shores of the Old Land. The grass may be growing green on their mothers' graves. The old boon companions, who shared their youthful gambols, are now far away from their native haunts, and the few that still hover around the scenes of childhood would not remember them. Still, there is a magic charm in the winding of the old barthen that leads up to the thatched cabin, now roofless and tenanted by the owl, whose cry is heard on the night wind, from those walls when once the chorus of glad-some children was borne aloft on the evening breeze.

Oh, My Home, my lost home, my loved home,  
There can never be another home for me,  
My soul flies nightly back through the wild winds and foam,  
And with its wet wings hovereth o'er thee.

THOMAS D'ARCY MCGEE.

These are the words of poetry; but they convey the feelings of the Irish heart, that, after religion, nothing else is so entrancing, nothing else comparable to the unpretentious cottage away in Ireland where the exiled child of Innisfail first saw the light, and no perplexing cares disturbed the sweet contemplation of sunrise over the holy hills of Ireland. After devotion to home, devotion to his country finds a warm place in the breasts of the Irishman. The two are, perhaps, linked so together that it would take the subtlety of the metaphysician to dissociate them. There is nothing endears a person to a good hearted individual more than patient suffering. Even the most stolid cannot help feeling sympathy with a sufferer. Ireland, the most prejudiced cannot deny, has suffered untold wrongs at the hands of England. What she has suffered during the Victorian Era, without going further back, is heartrending even in print. This is sufficient to win the hearts of Irishmen. Every son and daughter of Ireland has heard over and over that sad history narrated. It was whispered beside their cradles. In their youth, it was but too manifest when their innocent eyes beheld the dreaded hordes of police, constables and bailiffs, who marched in hostile array across a peaceful country to cast adrift on the world the family that lived hard-by. All these things, coupled with the fact that Irish hearts are naturally sympathetic, make them feel for their country and cement their attachment. How that genuine devotion to Ireland has been borne witness to in the past, and is being borne witness to in the present, is known to everybody. It was no false devotion that inspired the deeds of Owen Roe O'Neill, Sarsfield, and hundreds of other Irish warriors, whose names are inscribed in golden letters on the annals of warfare. It was from no motives other than those of genuine patriotism that those masters of oratory, Grattan, Flood, Curran, Shiel and O'Connell ceaselessly thundered and wore themselves to death in an incessant fight to remedy the wrongs of Ireland. Attachment to their country, a heroic resolve to lay down their lives for its liberties has been in the past, is at the present moment and, I may confidentially predict, will be in the future, a characteristic of the fiery Celt, an heirloom transmitted from sire to son, a pledge of inviolable fidelity to their native land.

During the last few years, Ireland's home life has suffered somewhat of a change, and I am sorry to say, not for the better. The young generation has endeavored to ape the manners of the English, at least to a certain extent. They thought their fathers and mothers, who spoke the old Gaelic speech, not fit patterns to be copied. They became infatuated with the ridiculous prints which English News agents, through the medium of their Irish agents, circulated throughout the

country. But just now the ax, I think, is being laid to the root of the tree. This onward current, which would inevitably produce pernicious effects on the national and religious life of the country, has been checked in its onward march by means, principally, of the Gaelic League. The Gaelic language is the title-deed to the rich genealogical inheritance every Irishman possesses; it is the only link which connects the Ireland of to-day with the Ireland of the past. So you see how invaluable a means such an institution as the Gaelic League is in carrying back the present Irish generation to the pure manners and customs of their forefathers, while at the same time they can share in all the modern literary and scientific discoveries by their knowledge of the Saxon speech.

Irish home life in the past was certainly ideal. Speak of the simplicity and purity of home life, it is certainly realized in the Irish home. Cares, indeed, they had, innumerable; worries that would have driven another people to desperation; but in spite of all the persecution directed against them, they never budged one inch from the doctrines of their faith. Succored by that faith, every scourge was only a gem on their crown. And it is exceedingly wonderful how cheerful the people were in their private life after that dark night had passed. Generally, suffering makes people morose, melancholy, sour in their dispositions and conduct, but not so with the Irish. Persecution left them as it found them, fewer in numbers, no doubt, but, nevertheless, with the same hot blood thrilling through their veins, the same faith in the world unseen, the same joyful serene countenances. They were still anxious to dispense, as their fathers were before them, from their scanty stores, bread to the hungry and drink to the thirsty who came along the way. Before emigration had reduced the country to its present scanty population, a traveler would imagine that the Irish were a very well-off people, because on every side his ears were greeted with the words of song issuing from the lips of the children of toil. It is different now; you travel for miles in some parts of the country, and no signs of human activity challenge your attention. It is an awful change. No longer do the neighbors congregate around the peat fire and tell their fairy stories to interested audiences; no more do they scramble over the mountain crags in search of fairy treasures; but with the revival of Gaelic speech we hope that the fire-sides will be again lit up with the carol and the story, that the good old fairy hosts will still hover insistently around the winter's blaze.

Emigration has, indeed, done mischief which is now irremediable. It has helped to lessen a very marked social characteristic of the people—their hospitality. Hospitality was ever a virtue of the Gael. It was peculiar to the chiefs and the clansmen and it has survived to the present day. The wedding and the wake, and the patron and the fair are instances of the occasions in which hospitality finds a place. The Irishman is glad, but he cannot keep his joy to himself. He must have his neighbors to participate in his simple celebration, and, as during his life he expects partners in his joy or sorrow, when he is dead he confidently expects a large gathering of people to accompany him remains to their last resting place. But the thinning of the population by emigration has sadly interfered with all these customs. With the young life fast ebbing out of the country, nothing remains behind but the aged and the feeble, who can do but little to perpetuate the old customs and manners.

The Irish have fine social characteristics, the loss or complete decay of which would be a serious loss to humanity. "The Celtic Spirit," as Wm. O'Brien finely expresses it, "is the saving salt of a materialistic age." It should then be a work of great merit on the part of those who have the power to procure for the Irish in their country proper industries, proper means of subsistence. It is only at home they can benefit substantially their country. Once emigrated in the busy multitudes that scramble for wealth and gain in the American cities, they lose those finer charms of character which they imbibed amidst the home scenes. Let us sincerely hope that grand old Irish customs be long-lived; that the grand old Christian spirit, that has survived through the turmoil and storm of centuries, may never falter or fail; and the fine old Gaelic speech, the language of the most chivalrous, religious people that ever peopled the earth, may flourish to such an extent that it may realize the prophecies made in its behalf, and shower blessings on the new century as it did on the centuries that witnessed it in noon-day splendor.—J. J. O'Mahoney, in Donahoe's Magazine.

## Some Irish Social Characteristics.

For I was born in Ireland—I glory in the name,  
I weep for all her woes, I remember all her fame,  
And still my heart must hope I may yet repose to rest,  
On the Holy Zion of my youth, in the Israel of the West.

THOMAS D'ARCY MCGEE.

The thought ever foremost in the mind of the true-born son of Ire-

land is the Motherland that bore him. It haunts his memory wherever his footsteps wander, and fills his imagination with pictures of the old places and scenes that he gazed on as a boy, ere he became an exile from his home and a pilgrim on the highways of life. In the course of his travels he may find scenes as charming as those found in the Old Land; he may find out climates as perfect, but there is no spot on earth so beautiful, no palace so gorgeous as could for a moment bear comparison with the shieling in the sequestered valley in Connemara, and no natural beauty of landscape could appeal to his aesthetic sense half so keenly as the turf smoke curling from the chimney of the homestead, where his boyhood years were spent. Now, it may be asked, whence comes this extraordinary attachment? this devotedness to a land that they could call securely their own, a home around which the sound of the crowbar would not be heard, of the

ment officials blent with the sobs and moanings of broken-hearted mothers and innocent children? Why should the brainy, enthusiastic Celt cast even a thought on a land that could not offer him an opportunity of hoarding up golden treasures, or prophesy even dimly to himself, that exert himself ever so much, he could ever find himself endowed with the sonorous title of "gold magnate" or "copper king"? Why trouble himself about a sorrow-stricken land, a land, for I might say six centuries ago, groaning under the twin burdens of exorbitant taxation and misgovernment? Why then this sentimentality, this clinging to ideal, abstract entities? "Why this useless talk of loyalty, of attachment?" is the answer of the materialist of our day who has never gazed beyond the narrow boundary of his own surroundings, and centres within that little space, taken up with his material cares, everything worth living for, both for time and eternity. But there are human beings whose

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