

# Old Letters.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

**AGRICULTURE.**—Last week I reproduced a letter from the book on "Agricultural Improvement" (1837) by Mr. William Evans. I find a chapter in that volume from which I desire to take a few extracts for the purpose, firstly of contrasting the conditions in this province sixty years ago with those of to-day, and secondly, of giving the readers some of the ideas of the men of that time on the general subject of female education. To this I can only take the extracts that suit the purpose I have in view, for the chapter would fill a whole page of this paper. Consequently I commence with Mr. Evans' plans of study in regard to the subject of education for the agricultural classes in the Province of Quebec. He says, by way of preface:—

"In discussing this subject, I shall endeavor first to ascertain the number of persons who require to be receiving education; the number of schools necessary; the number of teachers; their qualifications, and duties; the probable costs; out of what funds expenses might be paid and provided for, etc., etc."

This just gives a general idea of the scope of this chapter. We will just touch upon the first part, which deals with the probable number of the agricultural class "who should now be receiving education in Lower Canada." The object in reproducing the following extract is only to show, by way of contrast, the vast strides made in this province since 1837.

"By the statistical returns of 1831, the number of persons over five and under fourteen years of age was 93,000 of all classes. At the present, I suppose we may conclude that they amount to at least 100,000, and that the whole population is at least 600,000 souls, of whom 500,000 may belong to the agricultural class. In England they compute that near one-third of the population are over two and under fifteen years of age. If the same rule would apply here, we would have 166,000 of that age who belong to the agricultural class; and if so, there should be near 100,000 whose education should be provided for. I would not include in this number children under seven years of age. I think that in the country parts children require to be under the mother's care until that age. Infant schools may be very good in cities and towns for those who wish to have their children out of their way. But I think if children be kept regularly at school from seven to fourteen years of age, they will be able to obtain a respectable education, if it is possible to teach them, and the school masters and mistresses competent to do their duties."

Leaving aside the next few pages of comment, we came to this:—

"What number of schools would be necessary for the accommodation of 100,000 scholars, of both sexes? I would say that 1,000 schools, that would give separate accommodation to males and females, would suffice. This would give 100 scholars of both sexes for each. A good master or mistress will be competent to instruct 50 scholars, provided a proper system is adopted, the scholars formed into classes, and the best instructed appointed monitors in each class."

The foregoing gives us an idea of what the educational system in this province has grown to since the days when Mr. Evans calculated on a population of 600,000 thousand souls—double only, for the whole province the actual population of the city of Montreal. This brings us to a consideration of grave importance, and one that is equally as applicable to-day as it was in 1837. Mr. Evans says:—

"It is of the greatest importance to attend to female education; and in the appointment of female teachers, the strictest attention should be given to have people of irreproachable conduct in every respect and none other. We should recollect that the girls who may now attend the schools, will be mothers of a future generation—that they will be capable of giving some instruction to their children—and that the education of the mother will have an influence on the education of her children, as her conduct in life must have on that of her husband." Further on we find some very sane remarks on this branch of the subject, but I would here remark that this is dealing with country schools and schools for boys and girls, and the



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female teachers to whom reference is made are not to be confounded with the ladies belonging to religious communities—who constitute the vast bulk of the female teachers in Canada. Mr. Evans then proceeds:—

"Writers on political economy have, in general, considered female education as making no part of the system; but surely, if the wealth and happiness of mankind is the end in view, there can scarcely be a greater object, for none is more nearly connected with it." (Here we must observe that no account is taken of the higher spiritual object of education, the moral one that belongs to the domain of religion and that affects the preparation for a future life as well as for the one in this world.) "Let it be granted that, in the first instance, women are not educated with any view to carry on those labors on which wealth is considered as depending. Yet, surely, when they become wives and mothers when the economy of the family, and the education of the younger children depend chiefly on them, they are then of very great importance to society. Their conduct in that important situation must be greatly influenced by their education. Female education ought then to be considered as one of the things, as the conducting of which well, the prosperity of a state does in a great measure depend, it ought, therefore, to be attended to in the same manner as the education of the youth of the other sex. The great general error consists in considering the woman in her identical self, without thinking of her influence on others; but we find no state in which the virtue of men has been preserved where the woman had none; though there are examples of women preserving their virtue notwithstanding the torrent of corruption by which that of men has been swept away."

"I am perfectly convinced that in any general system of education, it is fully as necessary the females should receive proper instruction as the males. I do not say that they should learn all that it would be proper for males to be instructed in at schools, but they should know all that was calculated to produce pleasure and satisfaction to themselves and those with whom they may be associated. The knowledge that is good for human nature is good for them, and they ought to have it in their power to be effective contributors to the welfare and intelligence of the human family. In intellectual as well as in other affairs they ought to be fit helps to man, and if they receive a suitable education they will be so. Women should be so instructed that in everything, social, intellectual and religious, they would be fitted to cooperate with man, and to cheer and assist him in his endeavors to promote his own happiness and the happiness of his family, his country, and the world."

Before concluding this letter I will take one more extract, a brief one, from the closing thereof: "Youth badly educated make bad men, and bad men neglect the education of their children; they set them a wrong example; such is the case where a government does not interfere." I am at a loss to see exactly how this inference follows. As these extracts have now occupied considerable space, I will not impose any more upon the readers this week. I will, however, beg to be allowed to devote a little from my beaten path of old letters, to comment upon the one I have just quoted. Next week I will occupy whatever space the management of the "True Witness" can allow me, to point out wherein Mr. Evans has made some mistakes. I am perfectly aware that all these comments and views of Mr. Evans were written sixty years ago and that conditions have since greatly changed. I also know that he had in view mere country schools, and that he considered them from the non-Catholic point of view. But as far as the Catholic is concerned, it would not be easy for him to accept all the foregoing. Especially has experience taught us the danger of exactly what Mr. Evans advocates, the interference of the State

in the education of children. I will, therefore, reserve for myself the privilege of commenting more fully on this subject, in the next week's issue of the "True Witness."

## Our Boys And Girls

**THROWING STONES.**—The following dialogue between an old gentleman and young boy contains a lesson for boys who are inclined to indulge in such a dangerous practice as stone-throwing. It is thus reported:—

The factory had not been occupied for months. It stood at a distance from any other building; there was nobody to guard it, and the long stretches of unshuttered windows appealed to the boy irresistibly. Other boys had found them equally inviting. There was hardly a whole pane of glass in the north side, where the windows were most numerous.

But, yes—there was one. That was the one Ray Lewis was trying for, choosing his stones with due regard to size and weight, calculating distance with an anxious eye and chuckling whenever he shattered glass, even though it was not the glass.

He was so absorbed in the fascinating enterprise that the sudden interruption of it brought on a sort of paralysis. An old gentleman, standing very near, was watching him! He was absolutely too startled to run. The stone fell from his hand. He stood staring and trembling—until the spectator spoke.

"Used to do that myself," the old gentleman said, amiably. "Pretty good shot, aren't you?"

Ray plucked up courage. It was evident that this old fellow had nothing to say about the factory. "Yes, sir, I guess so," he answered, modestly enough.

"Think you could hit that little boy down the road there?"

"Course I could! Want to see me?" Ray picked up the stone he had dropped. But just as he was about to make the throw the stranger laid a hand on his arm.

"No, never mind," the old gentleman said. "I'll take your word for it. I suppose, anyway, you'd rather stone grown people and occupied houses than babies and empty buildings, wouldn't you?"

Ray eyed him wonderingly. That was a funny question! Yet it seemed to be asked in all seriousness. "I don't believe I would," the boy replied.

"You wouldn't? Oh, I see. The grown people would defend themselves, and the little people can't. If you broke glass in that house over on the hill you'd be caught and your father would have to pay; but when you break the windows in this factory there's nobody to tell on you is that about the size of it?"

Ray nodded.

"Seems kind of cowardly when you put it into words, doesn't it?" the old gentleman suggested. "A friend of mine used to say every stone-thrower isn't a coward, but every coward is a stone-thrower."

Ray flushed, but he did not speak.

"I wouldn't have thought of that when I was your age," he went on, steadily. "But I've wondered since what I thought I was doing when I was throwing stones. I wasn't playing soldier or Indian either, because they don't fight that way. Only city hoodlums use bricks and paving stones on each other, and I wasn't trying to imitate them, for I was a country boy and didn't know about them."

"I couldn't have had any serious idea of training my hand and eye by stone throwing, because if I had I should have set up a target down the field and practiced where I

wouldn't destroy property or run the risk of putting out somebody's eye—or taking his life. And yet I can't admit that I threw stones because I wanted to smash things and hurt people. Put it to yourself. You wouldn't like to think you were that kind of boy, would you?"

Ray shook his head. He did not raise it.

"Of course not," the old gentleman said, briskly. "I don't believe I was that kind of boy, either. But you're better off than I was. There are baseball clubs now, and a boy can learn to throw straight without being ashamed when he grows up of the way he learned. Since I've owned property—this factory, for instance—it has been very easy for me to realize what a mean trick I was guilty of when I used to break windows."

Once more Ray wanted to run. But the old gentleman clapped a hand on his shoulder in a friendly but compelling fashion.

"But I'm glad the boys-who-didn't think have practiced on my windows instead of on smaller boys and girls," the old gentleman added cheerily. "I'm glad that practice has made some of us perfect, too. You and me for instance. We've graduated sure-shots. We don't need to throw any more stones, and I don't think we will. Shake hands on it?"

Ray shook hands on it. Then he gasped and stammered and tried to speak a word or two. Failing, he fled down the road. But the old gentleman sent a smile after him and nodded his head with a satisfied air. He knew one boy who would throw no more stones.

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**FALSE NOTIONS.**—danger for the Catholic is a state of indifference. Ignorance now-a-days to be tolerated—and by that broad-minded, the opposite. Yet there is no bigotry in the Catholic. To be intolerant of error is the enemy of truth, it is bigotted. Bigotry consists to all others the rightful faculties and to be content simply because the our way of thinking. Nothing to crush and oppose individuals and a total thing to decline to accept form the errors that they propagate. The moment he grows tolerant of wrong error in any form, he is ferent to truth, and in the first step towards indifference what stands good in religion is equally good in education. It is a false allow that one religion is another one, and it is a chance to say that one religion is as good as another. Rarely have we ever found coupling of indifference and more clearly and briefly than in an address delivered occasion of the closing of of St. Cuthbert, at New Tyne, by Rev. Horace Maccomplaining of the lack of a day scholars the gentleman proceeded to point causes of this falling off. cases he said that poverty, but the principal difference on the part of the In this part of his splendid he said that "the age is to cause it is indifferent." And ed. "I am, however, pleased that I am addressing a body who are not tolerant, not indifferent in this respect. We will now take from dress a couple of extracts present to our readers, especially amongst them, in that they will read them on them carefully. Rev. Father said:—

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