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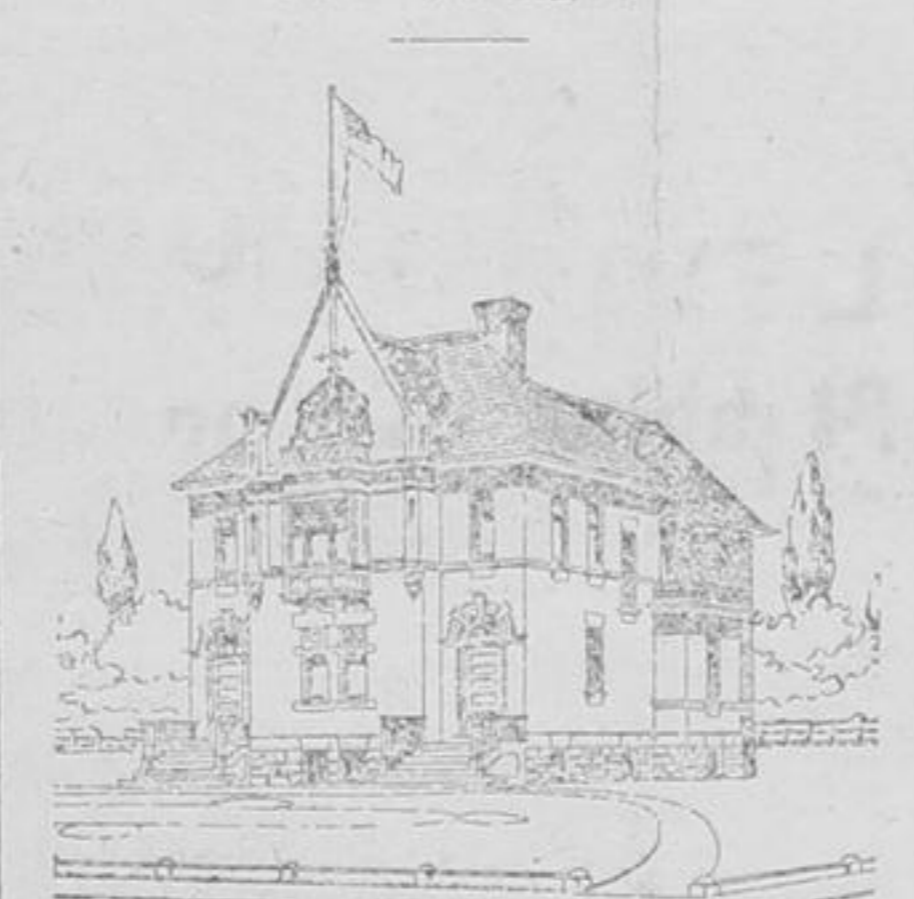
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MR. HARRISON'S ADDRESS.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I do not know that I am able to address an audience like this. I am too far advanced in years to attempt to play the orator yet to all of us this is an important occasion and as I have the honor of being a member of our Board of Education I would like to say a few words in reference to the progress of education in this locality. In the event of my not getting farther I would like to say that I am glad that I have lived long enough to see the erection of a new High School building in our village. When Mr. Chairman compares this handsome building with all its conveniences and the improvements by which in a short time it will be surrounded, with what we have had to put up with for nearly half a century, I wish that I had a High school education with all the ability that such an education implies so that I could tell you eloquently how glad I feel. I look upon this building as a very fine addition to the school accommodations of our village.

I came to this neighborhood, Mr. Chairman, when I was but a lad. I have not been in it but as a bystander. I have stood and seen education rise from very primitive conditions to the splendid privileges that our children now enjoy. I recollect the last chapter in the history of the first schoolhouse erected in our village built in the early twenties more than three quarters of a century ago when our people were few and far between. It was a hewed log structure about 20 by 40 ft., elevation about 10 ft. and chinked with mud. It had two or three small square windows, a low ceiling and a very low door. It stood a couple of rods south of where the present Public school buildings stand. I have talked with aged people who when they were children went to that school when it was new and they have told me that the schoolmaster of that day, Mr. Benjamin Barnard, father to Mrs. Jenkins of our village, would teach all day, look after the boys who played hockey, after four o'clock, and act as the village moral guardian during the evening hours all for the meagre remuneration of \$12 per annum. Quite a contrast sir to the salaries of the present day. In 1849 when its first brick successor was erected the old log building had to retire. It was purchased by a Mr. Dalby, landlord of the tavern, then known as the "Lass of Richmond Hill," now known as the Dominion Hotel, who converted it into one of the most useful institutions of the day, an institution whose merits and demerits are at present discussed on every political platform in Ontario, an institution, sir, that may yet be the downfall of the present government—A Figgery.

When our first brick school was erected in 1849 there was a great cry at the extravagance of the Trustees; many thought that a seven by nine building sufficiently large, but by the laws of generation and the laws of immigration it soon became too small and another of equal dimensions built at the west end. Again the rising generation began to show signs of swarming and had to be hived in what is now known as the "Old Grammar School."

Our first Grammar school was established Dec. 2nd 1851. In 1853 by the liberality of our people assisted by the government its first building was erected at a cost of \$640. The new institution soon got too large for its juvenile boots so in 1873 a larger building called a High school was built at a cost of about \$4,000 to which the people of our village contributed \$1,170 in a single year. This we know went up in smoke, Dec. 23rd 1896. Peace be to its ashes! We will forget its homely looks and remember it for the good it has done, and to-day we have the pleasure of celebrating the advent of its successor.

I have noticed, Mr. Chairman, that there has not only been a great improvement in school accommodations, but also a great advancement in our methods of sustaining education. How many there are in this audience that know nothing of the obstructions that lay in the way of education in days gone by. How few of all that are gathered here know anything of the old rate bill system of thirty years ago, when every pupil had to take twenty-five cents at the beginning of each month to secure for himself a seat in any rural school. It meant, sir, that the oldest boy went to school until he was big enough to do something else, when the next in age took his place on the school form. It meant that but few families could send all their children at once, and it meant that many others could not send any. In connection with the old rate bill system there was a free school clause. It was that a widow's children could get their education free by obtaining the consent of the trustees. A law placed on the statute books I have no doubt with the most charitable intentions, but looked upon then by the people as an innovation, it was made to act with galling effect upon those it was designed to benefit. The child of unfortunate circumstances, however respectable his family, was subjected to the insult of the ignorant and the sneer of the malicious until it burnt like hot iron into the brain. But a welcome change came when all classes, whatever should be their positions in society, could seek for education on the same level.

In 1866 the agitation that swept like a wave all over Ontario as to whether our schools should be sustained under the old rate bill system, or whether we should adopt free schools, reached our village. It was the subject of conversation in every group that gathered on the street; it was the chief topic in the hotel and in every home. Those who were opposed to free schools said that it was a most unjust thing, that it was mortgaging all our properties for all time to come, and that for the education of other people's children. One old gentleman, who was worth \$75,000, declared that it was monstrous! it was ruinous! Feeling was intense and excitement ran high in those days. Why, sir, the recent agitation on the selection of a High School site was nothing to it. For six weeks we kept up a discussion in the local newspaper to mould public opinion in the right direction, and, at the next annual school meeting, our people, always in the van of every righteous movement, were among the first in Canada that declared by a large majority in favor of free schools. In 1871 all the schools in Ontario were declared free. And now, sir, in all our Public Schools invidious distinctions are done away with—there the rich and the poor meet together, and the school master is a father to them all.

Mr. Chairman, I believe in education. I missed it myself, but I want my boy to have an education. I want every other man's boy to have an education, and I believe it is the duty of the State to see that he gets it.

In accounting for the difference of color in the human race and the variety of their occupations, Mr. Chairman, the Seminole Indians have a tradition. They say that Adam was made a black man, that his immediate descendants were black. One day three black men were standing on the banks of a clear sheet of water. The Great Spirit came along and said "plunge and be washed." One man plunged immediately and came out white, the next hesitated till the waters got dirty, plunged and came out copper-colored the third waited until the waters were muddy when he plunged and came out as black as he went in. The Great Spirit then threw down three packages and told them to take their choice. The black man thought he would not be too slow this time jumped and grabbed the heaviest thinking that it was full of gold. When he opened it he found that it contained a pickaxe, a shovel and a hoe—implements of labor. The copper-colored fellow grabbed the next heaviest when he opened it he found a tomahawk, a bow and arrows, a and trap—weapons of warfare against man and beast. The white man had to take what was left, when he opened his he found pens, ink and writing-paper—the foundation, sir, of the white man's superiority over all the human race. And so the Indians say: "White man he teach all peoples." Now Mr. Chairman I think that there is something in that tradition. I think that it is the duty of every white man to give to his son the very best education he can afford and to enable him to do so, I think that it is the duty of the State to erect suitable buildings with proper equipment and provide them with the very best teaching ability that can be secured. And I am glad to think that the state is trying to do so. I am glad to know that the facilities for getting education are so great and that the school house door stands wide open to every boy and girl who

desires to enter.

In my young days Mr. Chairman there used to be a saying that there was no royal road to learning. It seems to me that that proverb must be obsolete for to-day I think there is a royal road to education—a highway cast up by the Department of Education which every boy and girl in Ontario can travel with safety and success—a highway macadamized with nuggets of knowledge more valuable than those of Klondike that every student can gather as he runs—a highway whose milestones in the shape of graded examinations are easily reached and quickly passed, and judging from the success of the thousands who reach the object of their ambition in the annual examinations, the Department have not only made it an easy, but a pleasant road to travel. And, sir, I am glad it is so. I would much rather see the names of our young people as successful candidates recorded in the reports of the Department of Education than see those names registered in the dark catalogue of criminality in the Blue Books of the Government. Sir, I take no stock in the hint sometimes thrown out that in educating our boys we are educating them to become clever rascals. I know that there are those who prostitute their knowledge to evil purposes, and sometimes give the detective a long chase, but you may rest assured that had such never received an education they would have been criminal all the same, because they were built that way. No, sir, educate a boy, enlarge his brain, double his capacity for thinking, and he will think twice before he will violate the laws of his country. He will hesitate a long time as thousands do before he will drag his honor and his character into the dust.

And, sir, I believe in higher education. If your boy, Mr. Chairman, has brains, give him a chance. Let him study history. Every boy ought to have a knowledge of history. He ought to know something of dates and data—the genealogy of kings and queens, their virtues, their vices, their ambitions and their crimes. If the proper study of mankind is man, in history every student will find many a lesson that he ought to learn, many an example he might imitate, and many a character that it will be his duty to avoid. Let him study mathematics to enlarge his mental calibre, to strengthen his memory and to develop his judgment. And let him acquaint himself with classics. I know, Mr. Chairman, that it has been said that the dead languages have been so long dead that it is a pity to give them a resurrection, but, sir, classics broadens the mental prospect of every student, and brightens the intelligence of every home. I think that it is a nice thing for a young man to have the ability to translate for himself or be able to compare a translation with the original. I think that it must be a great privilege to converse in their own language in Latin, Greek or Hebrew, as the case may be, with men who were engaged in the activities of centuries long gone by, with orators, legislators and statesmen who moulded the destinies of nations, and with scholars and philosophers who laid the foundations of literature. Ladies and gentlemen, if your sons show an inclination for the acquisition of knowledge help them along, give them a "free pass" over the whole road to education. If they show diligence, and you have the money, give them the "right of way" through the whole curriculum of study from the Public School right up to the University, and the time will come when those boys will reflect credit upon themselves and honor upon their families. And, sir, when that young man becomes Bacon's "full man," and his brain filled up to the brim, if he is a wise young man, he will compare what he knows with the vast ocean of knowledge that lies spread out before him, to him the "Great Unknown," and he will come to the very sensible conclusion that he knows nothing.

(Continued next week.)

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