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THE Grey Review

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DURHAM, Co. Grey, JUNE 20, 1878.

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Religious Education in Public Schools.

(By Revd. Jas. Cameron in Canada Christian Monthly.)

In a recent issue of our Monthly we called the attention of our readers to the experience of the London (Eng.) School Board in their elementary schools.

This business is regulated in the London Schools by a Resolution passed by the Board, at the commencement of its labours in 1870.

On the motion of Mr. H. Smith, M. P. for Westminster, that, "In the schools provided by the Board the Bible shall be read, and there shall be given such explanations and such instruction therefrom in the principles of religion and morality as are suited to the capabilities of the children."

Wishing to know more about this important and interesting experiment, (which as a single fact is worth a bushel of fine-spun theories,) we wrote to Francis Peck, Esq., London, a member of the School Board, who has invested \$25,000 for the purchase of Bibles to be presented annually as prizes for attainments in Biblical knowledge.

In reply he sent us several official documents, accompanied with the following letter, which, as being on public business, we can here, without any breach of confidence, lay before our readers.

"It gives me great pleasure," writes Mr. Peck, "to comply with your request, and I think from the books sent per Book Post you will obtain the entire information that you require. I have only to add to it that while the proposition regarding the prizes met at first with the fiercest opposition from the secular party, since the matter was carried at the Board there has never been a discussion or dispute—they have allowed the syllabus to be adopted, and in fact two of the ablest now work with me that they are of the greatest assistance in promoting the thorough Biblical instruction of the children. This is the more remarkable as in England the opposition is intensified by the feeling on the part of the political dissenters that the maintenance of religious instruction in the Board schools is against the arguments they use for the disestablishment of the National Church.

Sincerely hoping that the religious feeling in Canada and America will secure a return to religious instruction in the National Schools, I remain, yours very truly, Francis Peck."

P. S.—I may also say that I met Goldwin Smith, so well known in America, and found that he was an advocate for the secular teaching only, but the placing in his hands the papers that you now have, I imagine must have convinced him; for I noticed in a public address given by him recently, he advocated religious instruction being given in this way.

In the documents, that came duly to hand, we find a large body of valuable information in regard to religious instruction in schools, in the shape of (1) arguments in behalf of the Bible in the public schools. (2) Statements and statistics showing the complete success of the system in London. (3) Reports of Inspectors on examination in Scripture Knowledge. (4) Syllabus of instruction in religious knowledge extending over three years. (5) Examination papers, giving all the questions for 1877. (6) Specimens of the answers given by the children in the different grades.

Under these six heads we have beside us material of a most important kind that might fill several numbers of our Magazine; but being restricted to a few pages our references and quotations at present must be brief.

Well worthy of our attention in Canada are one or two paragraphs in which we find laid down with clearness the essence of education in its true and highest sense—"Education, as the world itself indicates, should be the drawing out of latent powers; and in the application of this process due consideration must be had to the age and circumstances of those brought under instruction, so that we may not prematurely tax the strength or overload the mind with more than it can assimilate. We find then in the child three powers waiting for development, namely, those of observation, memory, and reflection; with which through instruction in the arts of reading, writing, and arithmetic, the child may gradually reach such a knowledge of the world around it, and of the special secular work it may have to do in the world, as shall enable it to take its proper place in due time as a useful member of the community. If, however, education is to be a real blessing it must not stop here, but should be applied to the whole being; taking no less cognizance of the moral than of the mental parts of the child's nature, namely, the will and the affections, upon the proper discipline and direction of which it will depend whether the powers placed in his hands shall be directed to the emolument of his character, the benefit of his fellow creatures, and the honour of his Maker; or to that better gratification of that selfishness which in its exhibitions of pride, covetousness, envy, lust, and other vices, degrades the man, and makes him a source of danger and misery to his fellows. It is impossible at the present to urge upon public attention the importance of the issue that is being raised as to the future character of the education to be given in our Elementary Day Schools, the more so since there is far too much tendency to shrink such a question as this when it provokes contest, and to let things take their course,—which, when unguided, is generally downward. Moreover we have

now an active and influential party who are straining every nerve to cast out the Bible from our schools, and introduce so-called purely secular education,—meaning thereby that the teaching shall be entirely, in the literal meaning of the word, "scientific"; that the teachers shall be mere machines for imparting the arts of reading, writing, and arithmetic, be forbidden to influence the children under their care in the paths of virtue by any higher motive than expediency; nor, however ignorant the children are that come under their influence, be allowed to say one word to enlighten them regarding the simplest truths of religion. It would seem at first sight that such a theory of education could only obtain acceptance in a heathen country; but the leaders of the secular party have of late loudly proclaimed their views, and have succeeded in carrying them into practice in the large town of Birmingham, where the Bible with every kind of religious teaching has been banished from the Board Schools.

One important advantage of cherishing in the community such a high and noble conception of the nature of education and the function of the educator, as we find in the above extract, would be to bring into the office of teaching men of strong religious convictions and high moral character. If Arnold of Rugby found himself narrow-cast down to teaching his boys Latin and Greek, and nothing more, he would surely have sought pastoral work, hardly finding the work of teaching congenial to his taste, and his pupils would have lost the Christian education which has been to them since, on their own avowal, of more value than all their classical accomplishments. In thorough harmony with this high conception of true education, we find Mr. Peck thus addressing the teachers of London, (present in the Crystal Palace on the distribution of 4,000 Bibles, as prizes for merit in religious knowledge,) in words well worthy the consideration of Canadian teachers:—"Yours is a noble calling, if you only rise to its high dignity; for upon the education of the young depends the character of the future generation, the welfare of our beloved country, and much besides. The present scene before me shows that you have not been unfaithful to your trust, for you have taught this Book without offence to any. One step more—show that your pupils are better and happier for your teaching, and the victory of religious education is gained. It is true that some say that you are not the right persons to be entrusted with the teaching of the Bible, that it should be left entirely to sectarian ministers. I know not whether this most insults you, who are declared unworthy to teach it, or God Himself, whose Word it declares useless unless accompanied by human influence. There are, as you know, many who would thus degrade your calling, and make you mere instructors in the arts of reading, writing, and arithmetic. This would indeed be degradation to condemn you to spend your lives in the mere mechanical drudgery of teaching young children the elementary arts of reading, writing, and arithmetic; to condemn you to see poor, degraded children pass from under your influence, ignorant of Christian truth, and morally debase, while you, forsooth, are forbidden to give one crumb of the Bread of Life to these starving souls. But if you are faithful to your trust, and throw your hearts into this part of your work, and thus show that you value your vocation from far higher motives than pecuniary gain, a rich reward will indeed be yours, and this degradation will never be inflicted upon you."

It will no doubt be interesting for parents and children, teachers and scholars, among our readers, to read the questions for 1877 for the highest class. Appended to each question in figures is the value of the answer, amounting in the aggregate to 100.

STANDARD VI.

1. Write down the first six verses of the 19th Psalm, and the last six verses of the 46th Psalm. (10)

2. Write a short account of the life of Elijah. (10)

3. Describe in your own words the teaching of the Proverbs regarding mercy and truth, trust in the Lord, and the reward of wisdom. (15)

4. Illustrate the teaching of forgiveness by a parable, and by Christ's own example. (15)

5. What answer did Jesus make to the following question which was put to Him by a lawyer, one of the Sadducees:—"Master, which is the great commandment of the law?" (10)

6. Give a brief account of the first journey of St. Paul. (15)

7. Describe the Ascension as given in Acts. (10)

8. Write down some fact or facts recorded in the Bible of the following persons:—The Woman of Canaan, Peter, Pilate, Agrippa. (15)

But most interesting of all, in these interesting documents, are the summing of results by the Inspector T. M. Williams, B. A., and the specimens given of the answers of the children. Mr. Williams, who is not easily satisfied with an answer, asserts on the basis of figures, and general averages that "the results of an examination are satisfactory on the whole." He then goes on to give some instances and examples of the results. He says:—"One of the examiners observes in a communication he has made to me, that he has been very much struck with the 'sound

ness' of the answers. I can fully endorse the remark. The good traits in the characters of Moses, Elijah, Elisha, David, etc., as mentioned in all, are invariably rightly distinguished; and the bad traits, on the other hand, are pointed out with equal correctness. This fact is prominently seen in the answers which have been given to the questions that relate to the teaching of Christ regarding rash judgment, forgiveness and humility, the meaning of the Parables regarding mercy and truth, and the questions that refer to Moses, David and the Pharisees. In many cases I have noticed that though the spelling is imperfect, and the style obscure, the principles of morality and religion, as the regulation of the Board in regard to Bible instruction puts it, are correctly, though faintly may be, appreciated. Thus, one little scholar sums up his view of the teaching of the Proverbs regarding mercy in the following words:—"When a man is out of work and owes you any money you must not summons him." Another child puts his summary of the teaching of the Parables regarding trust in the Lord as follows:—"If there is a question put to you, and you cannot answer it, ask the Lord and He will tell it you." The idea, though a faint one and clothed in home-spun, is in its essentials a correct one. I presume, a third child makes a somewhat serious mistake, though not an unnatural one perhaps, when he speaks of Christ as "having enough power to heal all the Jews and some to spare for the Gentiles."

"Peter, by the way, is rather severely handled by nearly all the Sixth Standard competitors that have attempted the questions which relate to him. All the weak points in his character are brought into prominence and animadverted upon, in some cases with great severity; while most of the good points are either very lightly upon, or ignored altogether. He is described as "passionate," "impulsive," "hot-headed," "forward," "hasty," "jealous," and "self-confident." He may deserve some, if not all of these appellations, but he equally deserves others of a more favorable purport. Was he not courageous, and bold, and faithful, and honest, and sincere, and affectionate, and self-sacrificing?"

"One of the Sixth Standard scholars begins her account of the life of Elijah with something like a strain of poetry. She writes:—

"This wonder-working prophet is introduced to our notice without any mention of his father or mother, as if he had dropped out of the cloudy chariot, which, after his work was done on earth, conveyed him back to heaven."

"Another girl of the Sixth Standard, in writing about the same prophet, makes a show of erudition which brings her no discredit, and has certainly brought her no marks. The slight blunder she has made is just of that kind which an intelligent girl would be liable to make when led to a subject beyond her depth. She writes:—

Elijah was compelled by God's direction to flee to Brook Cherith, where it is supposed either ravens or Arabs fed him. There is rather an uncertainty as to the exact manner in which he was fed, as three letters in the Hebrew language, r, e, e, mean either raven or Arab; it was, however, by a miracle that he was sustained."

"Many of the Sixth Standard competitors have succeeded well with the question which asks them to describe in their own words the teaching of the Proverbs regarding Mercy, Truth, Trust in the Lord, and the Reward of Wisdom. I append three specimen answers, two of which are culled from the papers of prize takers; the third occurs in a paper which falls below the mark for a prize.

(a) "The Reward of Wisdom" as expressed in the Proverbs is "length of days," "happiness," "unequaled riches" in the possession of it, "honour" and a "crown of glory." Solomon seems to imply that we can possess nothing better and more valuable, and it is our duty to avail ourselves of every opportunity of increasing it. A. B., 14 years old.

(b) Reward of Wisdom. Wisdom rewards us in many ways; we are happy if we find it. Her ways are pleasantness and her path peace. If we keep and forsake her she will love us, if we love her, she will keep us; if we exalt her she will promote us, and will bring us to honour if we embrace her. She will give to our heads an ornament of grace and a crown of glory. She is more precious than rubies, and more than fine gold. She is a tree of life to those who hold her; and happy is he that keepeth her. It shall be life to our soul, and grace to our neck. "Length of days she holds in her right hand, and in her left, riches and honour." A. B., aged 12.

"Lean not unto thine own understanding." Solomon here represents understanding as a post or similar object, on which people may lean. God's understanding is supposed to be strong, while man's is weak. So if a man were to lean against a post broken, or insecurely fixed, it would fall. But God's post is strong; "God is in the midst of her, and she shall not be moved." A. B., aged 12.

"I subjoin a few specimens of the answers that were given to the fifth question in the set which was assigned to the Monitors, Candidates, and Pupil Teachers of the first year—

(1) (a) "Ye are the light of the world."—Christ was speaking to his Apostles or rather to his disciples, and he calls them the light of the world. I think he signifies by this phrase that the glorious gospel should emanate from them, and that the world was somewhat dependant on them for the light of the Gospel.

(b) "This was spoken by Christ to his disciples, and it means to say, that just as a light shows a person the way, the road they are to follow, so the disciples were to be the bright light always shining to lead us onwards to everlasting life. No human audience, no false shame may place this light under a bushel, which is destined to shine through word and work combined."

(2) "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."

"This does not mean that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven, but that the riches and worldly goods which are possessed by a man, are as much encumbrance to him as the lump of a camel is, when entering through a narrow gateway."

(3) "Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow." This means that we are not to burden ourselves with undue cares and anxieties for the future, for God alone knows what is in store for us, and He who takes care of the lilies will also provide for us. Neither are we to lay down plans for the future, for "we know not what a day may bring forth."

In the written examinations, of which the above are some specimens, 82,062 scholars took part in 1877, as compared with 42,000 in 1876. Out of 126,000 pupils in attendance at the Board Schools in 1876, only 125 absent themselves during the half hour devoted to religious teaching; and out of 200,149 in attendance in 1877 only fifty absent themselves during that half hour. The percentage of London are not, it seems, afraid of the Bible; and of the teachers, a member of the London Board, says, "The overwhelming majority of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses would be greatly grieved if they were not allowed to give this instruction. They would feel that if they lost their Bible lesson, they would lose their greatest hold over the affections and minds of the children and the best means of widening and developing their faculties."

In the crisis that is now undoubtedly coming on the Christian Churches of Great Britain, ominous enough in its forebodings, as Spurgeon tells us in another place, it is surely an encouraging fact that the youth of London are being taught to know their Bibles. If the little seeds that lay for six centuries buried under twenty feet of soil in the Roman Coliseum, as we are told, have sprung to life, leaf and flower, as soon as exposed to the air and heat, in the recent excavations, then assuredly will not Bible knowledge be always dormant in these young hearts. But on this point let us allow the Right Hon. W. E. Forster to speak in the words used while presenting prizes in the Crystal Palace in presence of 20,000 people, while 4,000 children waved above their heads their prize Bibles.

"It is a very touching thing to see so many children before one, and very tantalizing to know that it is beyond the power of human voice to reach you; but, perhaps, some of you may read the few words I shall now say. It is impossible to see you without wishing you well for the future, without thinking what may become of you in that future; but it is well for us here—I feel it is well for myself—that the imagination is too weak to foresee your future in all its varied circumstances, and with its multitudinal and mingled sorrows and joys. If it were in the power of any man for a moment to foresee that picture before him, what sympathy could endure the strain? What heart could bear to contemplate such a picture? But this I think I can foresee for every one of you, this I think I can make as a confident prophecy for the lives of each one of you boys and girls before me—that there will be no circumstances in any of your lives in which this Book given to you will not help you, if you rightly use it; that there will be no sorrow—that it will not tell you how to resist; that there will be no perplexity which it will not assist you to solve; that there will be no grief which it will not give you power to bear, and no pure pleasure which it will not enable you more fully to enjoy."

If there ever was a cry in the ear of Christendom, and especially on the Christianendom of democratic countries, to look after the foundations of Society, that cry is now in our ears with a loudness that is startling. The working-men are awakening to a consciousness of a new power in their trades-unions. Bidding for the votes of the common people,—here on the one hand is poetry and superstition; and there, on the other hand, is Communism and Scepticism. Whichever party gets the young will carry the day and rule the continent. And shall Christians stand idly by in this great controversy? God is placing before us, very articulately, as our heritage for the future, military despotism or Christian freedom. On the position we give to Christianity in the education of our young, under God, depends the settlement of our future.

The Old Catholic Synod at Bonn has decided by a vote of 75 to 22 in favour of the marriage of the clergy.

Something should be done with that man Edison, who makes phonographs. Not content with tapping every telegraph line for its secrets, and practically ruining the privacy of that mode of intercourse, he is now making an attack on the most sacred confidence of America. He is said to be projecting an ear trumpet by which a conversation can be heard a mile away. It would not add to the enjoyment of our fine, calm, starry evenings to be conscious of this new demon detective. If Mr. Edison invents such an instrument, the most confine its use to newspaper reporters, who will, of course, use it only in the public good.

Melancthon Council.

Town Hall May 29, 1878.

The Council met at the Town Hall on Wednesday the 29th day of May, pursuant to adjournment. Members present, Robert McGhee, Esq., Reeve; Henry Hewitt, Esq., Deputy-Reeve; Messrs. August and Corbett, Councillors. The Reeve in the chair. Minutes of last meeting read and confirmed. The Treasurer presented his half yearly financial report.

Mr. August introduced By-law No. 42, for the purpose of appointing pathmasters, fence viewers and pound keepers for the year 1878, which was read a first, second and third time, signed, sealed, and engrossed in the By-law Book.

Moved by Mr. August, seconded by Mr. Corbett, That the Township Treasurer be authorized to receive from Mr. Barber the sum of \$11 returned in default against the E. half of Lot No. 25 1st con. O. S. for the year 1877, and that the C. Treasurer be instructed to erase the same.—Carried.

Moved by Mr. Hewitt, seconded by Mr. Corbett, That George Westcott receive an order for 75 cents for lumber and spears for culvert, and the Reeve issue an order for the same.—Carried.

Moved by Mr. August, seconded by Mr. Corbett, That the Clerk be instructed to obtain 50 printed copies of the By-law relating to the duties of Pathmaster, &c., &c.—Carried.

Moved by Mr. Hewitt, seconded by Mr. August, That the following persons be appointed Road Commissioners for the Township of Melancthon for the year 1878.

Robert McGhee all that part of the Old Survey from the south town line to the 25 side road.

William August all that part of the new Survey from the boundary of the O. S. to the 200 side road N. E., and all that part of the new Survey south of the 290 side line S. W.

James Corbett all that part of the New Survey west of the 290 side road to the 200 side road inclusive.

Andrew Ostrander all that part of the Old Survey north of the 25 side road and north of the 290 side road to the 6th Con. New Survey N. E.

Henry Hewitt on the S. W. side from the 290 side road to the town line of Proton and north of the 290 side line to the town line of Osprey N. E.

And the said Commissioners laid in their report at the next meeting of the Council.—Carried.

Moved by Mr. Hewitt, seconded by Mr. August, That whereas 25 or 30 staves purpose to work gratuitously between the 2 & 3 concessions O. S., it is resolved that the commissioner be allowed to expend not more than thirty dollars to procure men to shovel and pick for the teams for the purpose of connecting the gravel unfinished or said line.—Carried.

Moved by Mr. August, seconded by Mr. Corbett, That this Council do now adjourn to meet again on Wednesday, the 3rd day of July next.—Carried.

A Gentleman in a Boston suburb was asked if it did not hurt his lawn to let children play on it. His witty reply was full of parental wisdom and love. "Yes, but it doesn't hurt the children."

"Hey, Tommy," said a five-year oldurchin to another in the street, "we've moved into a house they call flats, 'n yer don't have ter go up stairs but ride up in the ventilator, 'n mother sends all the wash' to the foundry."

I am no fanatic, I hope, as to Sunday; but I look abroad over the map of popular freedom in the world, and it does not seem to me accidental that Switzerland, Scotland, England, and the United States, the countries which best observe Sunday, constitute almost the entire map of safe popular government.—Joseph Cook.

"Sidney Smith says: 'Marriage resembles a pair of shears, so joined that they cannot be separated, often moving in opposite directions, yet always punishing any one who comes between them.' The definition is as witty as it is wise; and he might have added: Part the shears, and then all you have left is two poor daggers."

THE LAND OF MIDIAN.—Captain Burton is so satisfied of the wealth still existing in the mines which he recently inspected in Midian that he intends to recommend the Khedive to allow him to form a company in England for the purpose of working them. Among the riches of the region which Captain Burton has examined may be mentioned gold, turquoise, and pearl oysters.

A WEDDING STOPPED AT THE ALTAR.—There was a strange scene at Chertford one day last week. A respectable and intelligent young lady was engaged to be married, and made the discovery that her affianced was in the habit of drinking, and told him what she had learned. He promised never drink again, and she forgave him. The wedding day was subsequently set, and all went well until the morning appointed for the performance of the ceremony. During the interval he made his usual visits, and though he drank at times, his betrothed never learned of his faithlessness until it was nearly too late to punish him for it. They were standing side by side, and a moment more would have made them man and wife, when he turned toward her and his tell tale breath spoke of whisky. When the minister pronounced the usual question to her, the response came faintly, "No." In surprise the question was again asked, and this time the response was clear and decisive, "No." She then turned to her lover, accused him of drinking, reminded him of his promise to her and said a man who would break a promise so solemnly made could not be relied upon, and she feared to trust her future to such a man. Expostulations and entreaties were in vain, and the little "Yes" still remains unaid.