

MY EDUCATIONAL MEMORIES

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IN what, I think, is the best of all Commencement addresses, Sir James Barrie told of Scotland's Fifth University, and, quite unwittingly of course, uncovered the very soul of our own educational efforts in Nova Scotia. "Scotland," he said, "has five universities, not four, and the greatest of them is the poor homes from which many of you came; homes that, in the past, said 'There shall be education in this land'; these are the real university of Scotland, and all the others are her whelps." Homes, the essential units of civilization, come first; here education begins, character building sets its foundations, and the fledglings, seeing a big world outside the parental abode, have their visions and ambitions awakened and long to take on the Wings of the Morning. The home has done its job, and wider and more specialized facilities for learning must be added. Perhaps Barrie's thought would be better had he said that, of the four universities of Scotland, the throbbing heart that keeps life and purpose in them all has its being and function in "the poor homes from which many of you came".

From such homes in Europe many of our pioneer forebears came. Some brought memories, bitterer even than poverty's tears, of penal laws which forbade education to people that, in the strangely stupid politics of the times, could more easily be broken, humbled and subdued when the ugly beast of ignorance was set on what was already a hard, uneven trail of existence. One thing was certain, there must be education in this new land; it began in the log-house in the clearing, and grew in strength and form with every advance of the evolutionary progress of the pioneer. Naturally the key that fitted every door of knowledge was first sought and acquired. Reading, writing and arithmetic, known as the three R's, furnished a working equipment for the simple, elementary business transactions of their environment, as well as tempering the social structures of the communities with about as much learning as the hewers and plowers of the primal woods and soil could absorb. The wives and mothers of those early homes, too, had their hands so full of household labor, and their whole being bent so to the task of nursing, feeding, clothing and doctoring their large families, that things of the mind had to wait a more pro-

pitious season. The whole setting of the pioneer bore the demands of the physical and the religious rather than the intellectual. The big trees of the forests waved defiance at his meagre but effective axe; the wild animals which often crossed his path and forced their living from the weaker ones of the bush, the wide stretches and the rushing torrents of the spring freshets in the streams and rivers, all impressed him, unconsciously perhaps, with the imminence and power of the physical order, and pointed the lesson that his own survival and success leaned on the strength and endurance he could put into the fight. Above it all was the sweep of the heavens and the whispering silence and mystic grandeur of the nights; the providence of the rains, the dews and the sunshine, which caused the seed in the soil his laboring hand had prepared to burst forth into blade and blossom and golden bread in the ear; and his thoughts, rising on the wings of faith in a Supreme Good, turned to the creed and forms of worship he learned long ago, in order to link his soul humbly with the unerring purposes of the Eternal.

There is little cause for wonder, then, that the pioneer soon sought to provide places of worship. The custom was pretty uniform among the pioneer races in all our provinces. In the Highland Scotch parts, in Nova Scotia and elsewhere, the meeting house and the chapel appeared very early. Whether Protestant or Catholic, the religious instinct was strong, and wove itself intimately into the web of their efforts at higher education. They felt keenly the need of educated leaders in the growing field of their endeavours and, above the rest, ministers of the gospel. Travelling missionaries from Scotland, Ireland, France and other European countries made occasional visits among the settlements, a few taking up their abode temporarily here and there. Among such people, strong in faith, and religious traditions reaching back into the dimness, it was an easy matter to keep the lights trimmed and burning; until communities, consolidated into parishes and theological schools within reach, began to experience the joy of seeing their own sons in the pulpits and at the altars. For when Faith goes before—

Like a lamp, and illumines the pathways,

Many things are made clear, that else lie hidden in darkness.

Some, at least, of our present-day colleges and universities started in this way. It was but a matter of widening further their scope into the field of intellect; to gather up the fruits of philosophy and the classics, and, in the realm of science, to learn

nature's marvellous technique of designing, controlling and guiding, so that the earth and its fullness may enable this strange old species we call Man to survive for a time and pursue his quest of happiness. The roots of our universities, academies and seminaries spread out in embracing digitations among the cottages and the mansions of our people, and draw to the great trunk of our higher education sustenance for its ever advancing growth. But there are deeper roots than these; smaller, perhaps, and covered with the hardening strata of four or five generations; forgotten often in the absorbing munificence of millionaire endowments, but very real and very beautiful. They tap the small springs of the spiritual and mental essence of our pioneer forebears, men and women who from the rough houses in the clearings, on the hills and in the valleys, declared long ago "There shall be education in this land".

Naturally, there were plenty of difficulties to overcome in the educational efforts of the early settlers. Facilities for acquiring instruction in even the three R's—readin, 'riting, 'rithmetic—were few, or absent, among the children of the pioneer. In the more sparsely settled districts the problem was formidable, and it was in such unfavorable places that school-houses were long delayed. There were few teachers, and it goes without saying that they were picked up by the more populous communities. The wayfaring schoolmaster did happen along at times. In my own old neighborhood, a rambling representative of the Irish Christian Brothers dropped, as from nowhere, into the settlement, looked over the family circles, probably with a critical and sympathetic eye, and concluded there was worth while work to be done. Then, after talking the matter over with a group of enthusiastic parents, he decided to start a school. There was no school-house, of course, and so for a while he divided his time among the families, a week here and a week there, his board and lodging being, to be sure, gratefully vouchsafed by the household. His stipend, salary, wages or whatever the nomenclature, was fixed by agreement with the patrons of the school, and, without documentary evidence, I have no doubt was truly and joyfully paid. It is, at least, equally certain the remuneration was not likely to tempt him to a career of reckless and prodigal living.

The pupils of this school have long since passed on. In my youth they were about, and I heard much of this schoolmaster. Nobody knew his past, and on this particular subject he was not communicative. He had seen active service in the British Army,

that was certain enough; for it was the one part of his history in which he allowed himself full liberty for his endless anecdotes and highly embroidered tales of military daring and hair-breadth escapes from—it was said—utterly impossible situations. Whether his quieter pursuit of education preceded or followed these thrilling experiences in field and camp, they never knew. He was fond of literature, liked to read aloud as well as recite from memory reams of verse and prose. His memory seemed equal to the task of either. With the acquirements and vagaries of the centuries following, he was probably remotely reminiscent of those bands of schoolmasters of the old Celtic schools of Armagh and Iona who, after the crash of Roman civilization, wandered over Europe and Asia, endeavouring to set the dying brands aglow again with the new light they bore from those ancient seats of learning. He had a goodly supply of school texts, such as were used by the teaching order of Irish Brothers, and so it came to pass that the first school books used in this particular locality were introduced and taught by this somewhat eccentric missionary of the paedagogic art. Before he left, however, or perhaps as we might say, before he got "fed up" with the job, he had taught the youth of the neighborhood to read and write and do a bit of ciphering. Some of them never got much more, for it was a good while after that the public school system came into operation, and school-houses and licensed teachers began to give substance and form to a great awakening.

Perhaps I have already tarried too long with this rather picturesque schoolmaster of a long passed generation. My excuse is that he represented a type common enough then in much older fields of primary learning than those of the pioneer and his family in a very new country, far remote from the "madding crowd". Also, because the type is gone, and quite likely forever; I make no plea for his reappearance. He would be as much out of place now in one of our school rooms as the pretty blond school Miss with her normal diploma, her permanent wave and her delicately manicured fingers would have been among the rough and tumble homespun-clad boys and girls, big and small, who, quickly or not at all, had to be equipped with such essential knowledge as would guide at least the more ambitious among them to create advancement through efforts of their own.

All schoolmasters in those days were dictators. The idea of coaxing sweet reason along the paths of development, creeping as it were from one elevation to another, was not a popular

notion of the paedagogic mind. Coaxing and creeping was suggestive of the nursery; there was no time or room for the patter and prattle of infancy; that was done with, and more substantial things should follow. Knowledge must be poured in; and, if it did not flow easily, then it was the schoolmaster's job to force the pressure, even to the breaking point of some unstable mental mechanism. The line between knowledge and education was not discerned, and subtle relations between the two were left a good deal to the undisciplined normalities and vagaries of the individual mind. We have all heard of the fellow that memorized the *BRITANNICA* up to the letter G, after which his education stopped abruptly. The fault, if it was a fault, of the old-fashioned teachers was to regard the brain as a sort of receptacle for huge accumulation of unassorted facts, and set upon the memory the job of keeping them indexed and within calling distance. The wayfaring schoolmaster of my old neighborhood brought to the first school there qualities such as these. His hand of discipline was strong and active, and his tongue resourceful and stinging enough for a close second place.

After he had established himself well as a teacher, the settlement provided a temporary school room in an old building centrally located, and used in part as a carpenter's workshop. It was rough, of course, but had four walls and a roof and, while the latter was a bit open to the weather when it rained hard, it met the essential needs of his pupils. He could create some measure of organization and discipline. His scholars were of all ages up to adult life. He made a speech the first day, in which he reconciled the rough environment with the essential aims of education. Every log in the wall spoke a silent message to the youthful mind; even the moss which stuffed the interlying cracks suggested how Nature's humblest bounty may serve man's proper needs. The adjoining carpenter shop took him to the land of the gospel, from which he returned with a well proved case for the sacred tradition of the carpenter's handiwork and its close association with the life of the Divine Teacher of Christian truth. What he said about the leaky roof is not recorded. He may have used it to illustrate Newton's law, with, quite likely, an aside rebuke for the botching workman in the case. His temper was automatic. Even in the very ecstasy of imparting knowledge, if provoked by some observation or incident, he would flare into frightening volubility which, like a sputtering rocket, scattered varied colors and sounds into the air, without doing any harm, and with little more interruption

in the continuity of his teaching than the memory of a well illumined exclamation point. With his tongue and a long leather tawse, he kept order. The earnest, eager scholars had ever his good will and tireless co-operation; the indifferent, the stupid and the refractory got what was left of his educational zeal, and a full monopoly of the varied technique by which he sought to make them learn and behave. Most of those disciplinary methods had the smack of the physical in them; but by nature he was kindly, and took pride in his bright pupils. Like Goldsmith's schoolmaster—

Though severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault.

Across the years I hear the words of a grey, old man, a former pupil of this school: "He taught us to read and write, and gave us a peep into a bigger life than we had known."

Not all the early schools were as primitive as this. Before the coming of a public school system, however, the boys and girls in many of the settlements had few opportunities of obtaining even a rudimentary schooling. Those that did better than this were the pushing, brilliant ones in whom the desire for learning became a sort of passion. Having been taught to read and write, they urged on their quest by hard patient study into the higher departments of learning, and a few of the most persistent pilgrims reached the heights. Our history has carved a permanent niche for some of these; others, less in the public eye and perhaps closer to the people from whom they sprang, followed the quieter pursuits of church, school and industry, and in no less degree multiplied their talents a hundred fold by serving well their time and generation. What education they acquired was thus in leadership, small and great, made available to a busy, hardworking people whose efforts were primarily bent to the task of pushing back the forest, reclaiming the land and providing the ever increasing homes with some measure of comfort. Poverty and want are the twin sisters of despair, and this ugly thing may smear and tarnish the chamber of the most highly endowed minds. The background of the pioneer's children was wholesome. Their food was plain and abundant; their clothes, woven mostly by hand, were comfortable and durable, and met the social requirements of the community. An "inferiority complex" was not likely to be called up in the wearer of a home-made frock when all her associates at the party were identically arrayed. When our very remote

ancestors went about in skins, either their own or with the added comforts of those pillaged from the lower animals, no one marked whether the particular cut of the bear-skin on the social belle of the rendez-vous was *a la mode artiste*, designed for comfort alone, or just daring and quite improper. "The hand of little employment hath the daintier sense". Utility and comfort come before the vagaries of fashion. When people begin to have leisure, when the fear of bread winning is past, the season for fuller growth of the mind is coming in. Art, with its ever growing sense of discrimination, is on the way, and the new social order regards itself critically in the mirror with an awakening sense of form and beauty.

In my own schooldays, teachers urged their lagging pupils up the path of knowledge by setting up the glowing example of some well-known personage who, under kindred handicaps and hardships, had climbed the educational heights to distinction and fame. I have a very distinct recollection of most of them, but one in particular stands out. He was then an old man, with a long grey beard and heavy shaggy eyebrows, from whose ambuscade peeped a pair of sharp piercing eyes. In his early life he taught school, learned land surveying, then studied law and went on, step by step, through important public service to the Supreme Court Bench, rendering at every point of a long career substantial service to his country and people. The older folk used to tell us of his struggles to obtain education. Poor, of course, the son of a pioneer in one of the settlements, he picked up only the merest rudiments in the district school. He borrowed books, and with the light of the blazing log fire in the big stone fireplace he proceeded to educate himself. Farm jobs occupied his time after school, and on days when there was no school. Lamps were expensive and used little, if at all, in the pioneer's house. Candles were home-made and, therefore, less costly, but for the young student to light his way into midnight, and beyond, made some demand on this branch of the family economics. Hence, retrenchment was called for. He met the situation by gathering up in the nearby woods pieces of pitch pine which, lit on the hearth, supplied the light for his reading and study, and enabled him later on to enter a law office and begin his career. Similar instances of successful educational striving were never so common as to lose their inspirational value. Only those of special natural endowments could call up the courage and constancy to break through the invidious bars of circumstance and follow such example. It followed,

therefore, as a natural sequence, that what we call higher education was attained by the comparatively few, and these fortunate ones stood out in whatever spheres they chose, as leaders and advisers, hewn from the same quarries as their following and, in the fundamental things, standing fast and firm as their source.

Life was simple then. The objective of the average pioneer was well in range of his mental vision. Experience had given him a rough and ready technique for attaining his ends. He had that sense of independence I think all men have who, by honest labor, extract from the soil their own bread; his ambitions were few, but clearly perceived and almost passionately pursued. Outside the immediate circle, wherein he toiled and planned, he was not a thinker. And as time went on, and community problems began to arise, he felt the need of leadership, and a growing social order soon began to do what it always did in like circumstances; it called up from the ranks, here and there, those with the stuff in them for directing and organizing a necessarily disjointed people. There is a goodly measure of truth in the ancient dictum, that those who think must govern them that toil. Nature, always provident of the type, provides human beings with unperceived resources which time and conditions may quicken into service for the general good. Oliver Wendell Holmes, once commenting upon the almost miraculous power of environment and the general fitness of things, said, if a beautiful young maiden were cast upon an uninhabited island in the middle of a vast and unexplored ocean, and if someone happened on the same place a year afterwards, he would probably find her walking along the beach with a vigorous, handsome, young man. Where indeed did the young man come from? Again Nature's fondness for the preservation of the type, or, perhaps, a miracle? Many of our forebears believed in miracles; but, first of all, that their own existence and progress rested in themselves; the rest they would leave to God, or as doubtless many of their descendants now, of lesser faith, would leave to the natural, resourceful evolution of human society. However one designates causes, there came up in times from the farms leaders in all local activities, as well as outstanding ones who helped to mould the political, educational and economic structure of our country. We warm at the thought of those who surmounted the impediments of birth and environment, and reaching the seats of power, devoted themselves to unloosing the shackles of unrighteousness that the essential equality of men and women on this planet might be maintained, and that, in the more obscure

and humbler walks of life, a just measure of the world's bounty and beauty might be made available to all men of good will. We like to think that from the log cabin came many of the leaders that strove successfully to this end. The world's most outstanding example was Abraham Lincoln. His coming was inevitable, you say, for the cause was supreme. Lincoln was the answer.

Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God.

I was seven years of age before I was thought fit to do the mile of wooded mountain path which linked my old home with the school. I tried to find the once familiar foot trail recently while fishing some of the streams in this area, but only in few spots could I pick up the identifying bits of evidence which defied the effacing years and memory's lapses. There was the big granite boulder with the white birch squatted on its top, with its interlacing roots gripping dangerously down its steep sides and trying hard to maintain a patchy covering of moss. We used to wonder that so poorly rooted a tree was surviving the gales and sleet storms, and I was not surprised to find it had long since let go its uncertain grip upon the rock and was lying flat across the line of the old pathway, with the white bark parchment still wrapped about its dead trunk like an Egyptian mummy. I remembered well two boys who used to climb into its branches and shake it violently, in order to test the strength of its anchorage in the shallow moss. Then again, there were the falls, where the path turned and followed the bank to where the stream narrowed between high cliffs spanned by a foot bridge of two trees dropped side by side across—in the choppers' best technique. They were still there, but a bit the worse of the wear, and I paid an old time tribute to their constancy by straddling their centre span and hooking a trout from the flaky current beneath. Of course, there were other marks on that old way to school I could recognize, but in the second growths of fir and spruce the path disappeared completely. The removal of the school-house to another part of the section, and the depopulation of most of my old neighborhood, meant the abandonment of the crooked, old trail now crowded with as many memories as there were then rabbits, birds and squirrels in its bushy shadows, or June blossoms on the wild cherry trees that lined the way.

The school-house was located in the valley, the most populous part of the section. We were the mountaineers, and the

little foibles of geography of course played their part, so that emergency mobilization on the school grounds, when a scrap got out of control, usually found the mountain and valley forces on opposing sides. We used to think the former belligerents, though generally outnumbered, had the better fighters; but I have quite forgotten if that view had any adherents outside our own ranks. I rather think not. Perhaps the numerous tales of our Highland neighbors, of how their forebears used to wipe up the lowland fens with the lesser breeds peopling those areas, gave us the much desired suggestion that our own hill-top farms span a mightier fibre into their human progeny. Many a "superiority complex" has bulged into prominence for no better reason. The school section comprised a territory at the blind end of a large settlement; it was at the end of the road—a sort of regional cul-de-sac. At one end it opened abruptly into wider and bigger farms, forming a larger and more prosperous community, which boasted a school and attendance much superior to our own. The opposite, or blind boundary, was tangled up in broken and unbroken woods, channelled with all sorts of distorted logging tracks, plenty of brooks and swamps, an occasional bear, more than an occasional fox and, if rabbit pies could be counted on the hop, they would pile up to the dimensions of Sugar Loaf or Brown's Mountain. The gentle breezes of intelligence and social kinship were wafted to us through the open end of our settlement, and we went out into the big world through the same exit. From the other came the murmuring language of the woods, hard to interpret perhaps, but stirring in the young mind a sense of the mysterious, of the unknown, of nature in its wild strength and naked beauty. Maybe, too, the voice of the forest bore a challenging call to its youthful neighbors in the clearings to make the most of their hard environment; to build from their own woods and quarries foundations of character and persevering courage.

The school children of my time were a third generation. In this particular section they bore Irish names. Irish-Scotch blending was, however, away with a good start, and a boy or girl with a parent that would cross himself at the mention of Cromwell, and writhe in fury at the music of the *Boyne Water*, might be heard relieving his emotions through the medium of the vivid tales and tragic strains of a partial Highland ancestry. Even the language of Eden, supposedly the exclusive right, privilege and sustaining ecstasy of the Highland soul, was sometimes heard muffling its way through lips that answered to

names often heard doubtless above the din and the shouting, and, of course, the glory of Clontarf. Irish Gaelic or just Irish, as it was called, was not in this country passed on to the pioneer's descendants. It is not easy to give a good reason. The clansman spirit was strong in the Scotch, and the Gaelic tongue alone could breathe its emotions and fiery zeal; the language of the heart, someone said. As clansmanship began to drop into history and tradition, Gaelic weakened, and now in the fourth and fifth generation it is not spoken at all. Its preservation now rests on organized education. Long before the tide of immigration had turned towards the New World, the old Irish cleavage to a system of clansmanship had disappeared. The Irish pioneers in the woods of Nova Scotia knew Irish Gaelic, but they spoke English, and this language alone they transmitted to their children. Before the fireside when a few neighbors were socially foregathered, and tales of the old "troubles" began to warm in the fire of their Celtic memory, it was observed by the younger group that they often broke into their native tongue in a verbal torrent which reddened their faces and for a few passing minutes disguised their usual good nature with a hard mask of belligerency. Quick return to normal complacency was signalled by a return to English speech. Such incursions into bilingualism served at least two purposes: it concealed from the growing mind of a new citizenship things—tragic and disheartening stuff, much of it—which belonged to experiences of an order they would not see reproduced, and at the same time allowed them the exclusive privilege of calling up the memories of old wrongs and ignominies; of exciting revels and political scraps, of the bare-knuckles and black-thorn species, and all garnished and properly expanded in the resourceful similes of the Irish Gaelic. A prayerful old pioneer of my early school days would recite in English the long-drawn-out family prayers, and top them off at the end in a burst of devotional Gaelic which, I am sure, in its spiritual ecstasy would give St. John's gospel a hard run to maintain its lead.

An impediment in the way of perpetuation of Irish Gaelic was that, apart from the towns and cities, Irish immigrants did not settle in large numbers. Those that came on the land seem to have settled here and there, where they mingled with settlers of other national strains. In the parts of Nova Scotia I know best, the intermingling was mostly of Highland Scotch and, to a lesser extent, French Acadian. The sons and daughters of an Irish speaking pioneer couple I knew, settled in a High-

land section, came through speaking Scotch Gaelic reasonably well, and with little knowledge of their parents' native tongue. Of the boys and girls who attended my old school, none but the few of full or partial Highland strain could speak a word of Gaelic. Even this third generation of Highland Scotch spoke Gaelic in their homes and, in fact, to most of them it was their first language. Having learned to think in the terms of this language of the heart, it was a good deal of an effort to remodel the subtle process of the mind and translate the expansive word picturing the more colorful Gaelic into the colder and more conventional English. And this is what many of those did who pushed on to higher education and outstanding leadership in church and state. Having apparently served its purpose, Highland Gaelic is now declining, while its twin sister tongue of Eire has been called up to serve an equal part in the dual-lingualism of Irish nationality. The Irish branch of Celtic speech had behind it a fairly extensive literature which, added to the intense nationalism, organized and expressed by recent political developments in Ireland, make pretty safe guessing that the language of Armagh and Iona, of Colum-Cille and Ossian is not likely to pass from the earth.

I think it was Oliver Wendell Holmes who said there were three important occasions in which each of us is the central figure, namely, one's christening, marriage and funeral. Of but one of these are we likely to recall the events and incidents of the function. Memory is a bit silent on the others. But there is another day and event in which no shadow blurs the trail of our recollections, and that, I believe, is our first day in school. We may have forgotten extraordinarily important things. Perhaps memory has slipped a cog on how, at your first church appearance, you violated the solemnity of the family pew by shouting words of recognition at a little chum across the aisle; or maybe your first commission to drown the kittens, before they opened their eyes, in the old mud pond behind the barn, has somehow got out of focus; but that first day in school, I'll bet it's still there and tugging at the curtain of the years in order to slip out before memory's footlights. It is the really important things we remember, Barrie said; and I would add to it—at least the things that seemed important in our very impressionable years. One's first start for school was a good-sized event, and long in advance was a matter of interest and discussion in the family circle. Some equipment was required. Nearly a mile and a half to walk to and from school meant, in the winter

months, better foot gear and warmer clothes; and so the old loom in the loft had been on extra shift; if last year's boots were to do another winter, they were patched and halfsoled, and the new candidate for educational initiation underwent a pretty general family appraisal; had probably a haircut by some older member of the household, and a final impulse to extend the morning face-wash well into the hoarding area behind the ears. Text book requirements were simple in the extreme at this stage. The little blue covered primer with the A B C's on the first page, and pictures of a dog, a pig, a fly and some others, standing over their heavy typed names on the second! Since in our school a long sustained tradition decreed that, no matter how well he knew "his letters", the new scholar should remain in the A B C class for some weeks from his entrance, and since the little blue primer was a fragile thing, it often happened that some discerning elder cut and pasted the alphabet page on a cardboard, or piece of a shingle, which handle-shaped like the old fashioned hairbrush supplied the young postulant with a ready and durable reference code. This met all his educational needs until, his probation passed, he moved to the second page and then on and on until the little blue book was finished and he began to feel the impulse for further adventure.

There were few periodicals of any value to the budding school boy or girl in most of the homes in our section. The weekly mail brought, as a rule, the weekly newspaper, and if you looked carefully about the house, a faded volume or more, extolling the heroic virtues of some Scottish chief or Irish patriot, might be found; or maybe a relation in the States had sent a bundle of recent dailies, all flaming with headlines you could warm your feet on, and full page delineations of sanguinary looking giants in the various attitudes of pugilistic aggression. The letters fairly jumped at you, and the children who picked up the alphabet with their aid had a colorful experience at the start. I shall not tarry to analyse too critically the effect of such hair-raising literature on the sprouting minds of our youthful rustic knowledge seekers. In many directions life was a bit drab and colorless, and any door opening into a new region of exciting scenes and action, in all likelihood, stirred up more brain cells and rippled more currents of fancy than the sober, measured diction of many a studied text. The child mind is a little like the digestive system. As in it, all the potential assets have to be drawn from their hiding places and set going, so they will be able to mill out the millions of unassorted impressions that crowd through

the gateway of the mind. For a growing digestion, a mixed diet serves best the purpose of increasing the active and potential resources of the secreting and eliminating machinery; even a measure of roughage in the diet plays a stimulating and necessary rôle. The brain, too, needs its mixed diet, and its roughage, although the almost infinite varieties of its processes call for a measure of selection and more careful balancing of quantities and kinds. And so, in my old school section, whatever bit of mental excitement we got was much needed, and played doubtless a useful part.

As I said, home libraries were nil, and whatever came the way, therefore, became part of our unassorted mental pabulum. I can not pass over this very early stage of our education without calling up in memory a little yellow paper-covered annual which, with the regularity and certainty of the earth's journeying, found its way into every household in the neighborhood. It was somebody's almanac; and strange to say, the author's name is the only thing about it I don't remember. It may be still in existence, for all I know. I learned my letters from it, and am, therefore, well disposed in my recollections of this little yellow gleam in the dusk of one's educational beginnings. Sown through its weather prophecies and patent medicine advertisements were some good jokes. It advocated in terms that would top some of our radio efforts the salvaging of the broken and distressed of our species by the copious use of Haggard's Yellow Oil; and, to all but unthinking skeptics, made it perfectly clear that man's uncertain and perplexing way here below could be straightened, smoothed and brilliantly lighted by constant and dutiful ingestion of Burdock Blood Bitters. The little book had other resources than its appeal to cold reason. Emotions were blown to the sputtering point at the tragic picture of the living skeleton bent towards the earth and with both hands on his crutch feebly supporting this arc-segment of rag and bone. Under this triumph of the artist's skill were the words—"Before taking". And then hard by was a striking metamorphosis; an up-and-coming looking man of affairs, well nourished and radiating virility. This picture of physical perfection stood above the words—"After taking". What youngster could fail to be impressed with the mighty power of such a medicine? His imagination was stirred. The fatted calf of his scriptural lesson never wrought such transformation in the ragged, starved prodigal as he now beheld in the almanac! Why bother about fatted calves any way? Burdock Blood Bitters was the thing. Just inside the cover was a partly

eviscerated male figure surrounded by symbolic pictures of certain animals of land and sea, and beside each was a kind of pot-hook sign. Radiating from sundry anatomical regions of the mysterious looking central figure were lines which terminated at the signs. An elder brother or sister, whose education was well nigh finished, told us these were the signs of the Zodiac, which didn't make us any wiser, even after he had hazarded the opinion that quite likely Zodiac was the Evil One himself. So there was a bit of magic, of the darker kind, about the almanac which added to its interest and tallied with the subtle art of forecasting the weather. In weather prophecy the almanac's standing rested entirely upon the times it was right; never on its wrong predictions. No quantity of negative data was permitted to lessen the prestige of this slim little annual, which dangled from a loop hung in the most accessible part of the household.

The school buildings in the country district which housed the boys and girls of my third generation still hold their place on our educational campus. Few new ones have been added and, in recent times, some of the weaker sections, drained of their population, have either dropped out of existence or were tagged on to adjoining ones. Many of the school-houses look the same, *plus* the scars and blotches of the years and the elements. The pioneers built some; the rest came from their successors of a second generation. The school builder's art improved with the repeated calls for more accommodation in the cities and towns, but in the country, with either a standard or thinning population, the old buildings continued to meet the requirements; and so they remain, a goodly number of them, in old and battered raiment, but very proud of their history; poor in the things the moth consumes, but rich in the fine part they played in gathering under their protection the eager youths of the farm and fishing coves, and keeping the lamp of learning trimmed and aglow. They are still on the job, doing their level best to cover the work of several school departments with one teacher in one inadequately furnished room. An old pupil of one of the poorest equipped of these schools, and subsequently a teacher in another of similar educational pretensions, doffs his hat in grateful recognition of the good things they accomplished.

If ghosts are in the habit of revisiting scenes of earthly activity, I should think those old school-houses would furnish ideal rendezvous. They would come, of course, in ghostly season,

at night, or at least when school is not in session. They would find many things as they left them, at least enough to create a homey feeling and set memory on the wing. I am still clinging tight enough to my muddy vesture to disqualify for membership in such an assemblage; but I submit, with proper humility I trust, that no ghost can outdo me in the recollections of my early school days; and so, I have worked my way back through more than half a century of well beaten trail and with an old Royal Reader, a slate and a few other essentials, am squared off in my old place and ready for A Day in School.

PARLIAMENT HILL

ARTHUR S. BOURINOT

Great men have known the beauty of this hill,
Bound by the river at its rocky base,
Brooding upon the destiny of our race
The dreams they visioned they are with us still.
Macdonald whose great heart and vigorous will
Welded disparate parts in unity,
And Cartier too and all that galaxy
Who planned and worked the union to fulfil.

Time has not touched the beauty of its face,
This hill that links the present with the past,
Impregnable it stands to front the blast,
A diadem of stars upon its head,
Proud in the thought that here the mighty dead
Find forever an imperishable place.