

GIVE THE BOYS TOOLS.

THE HALIFAX SCHOOL BOARD AND MANUAL TRAINING.

What Well Known Educationists Think About It—The Results in Some Places. The Effect on the Rising Generation of Halifax.

The following paragraphs are taken from an essay entitled "De Juventute," by President Daniel C. Gilman, of the John Hopkins University, in the February Cosmopolitan:

Neither precocity or dulness is any certain index of the future of a boy. Only a wise man can tell the difference between the priggishness of conceit and the display of musical talent, and it takes a superlatively wise man to devise right methods for exciting temperaments that are dull, or on the other hand to guide a genius. Give the boys plenty of open air, and when they cannot have this encourage within doors exercise in handicraft, the use of tools, knowledge of the book of sports, not to the exclusion of other studies, but as collateral security to the mind and the body shall be simultaneously developed.

Writing on the same subject, Sir John Lubbock says, in substance:

At present, schools to too great an extent fit us for the university rather than for the world. We need not fear over-education, but we do suffer from misdirected education. Manual work for boys, in the opinion of Sir P. Magnus, deserves as much recognition and assistance from the state as needlework for girls. The introduction of manual work into our schools is important, not merely from the training of the hand as an instrument, but also from its effect on the mind itself. The absence of such is one of the great defects of our present system. Boys who are required to sit for hours at a desk, without muscular exercise, lose the love and habit of work. Hence, to some extent our school system really tends to unfit boys for the occupations of after life, instead of training the hand and eye to work together; far from invigorating the child, it tends to tear his association from all industrial occupations, which, on the other hand, revenge themselves when their turn comes by finally distracting the man from all the associations of manual instruction has been elaborately worked out in Sweden. The object has been to give the hand not so much a special as a general aptitude, suited to the varied circumstances of practical life, and calculated to develop a healthy love of labour, to exercise the faculties of attention, perception, and intention. The object sought is not to make a workman, but to train up a man; not to train for a particular occupation, but to obtain a general development.

Since 1885 Supervisor McKay (from whose report the above abstract is taken) had been bringing these and similar ideas before the board of school commissioners for Halifax, and in 1891 those gentlemen caused these ideas to materialize in the form of a manual training department for boys, which was opened at the Alexandra school in September last.

All honor to the Halifax school board, the pioneers—as far at least as Canada is concerned—in this movement. In school matters, boards are rather inclined to be conservative, especially if an innovation touches the pockets. In this case, however, the expense cannot be raised as an objection, as will be shown later. Indeed, no objection has been found which can weigh for a moment against the overwhelming arguments on the other side. For the benefit of those not familiar with the subject, or indifferent to it, the following concise remarks by Supervisor McKay, a recognized authority on educational matters, are appended:

One great object of the manual training school is to foster a higher appreciation of the value and dignity of intelligent labor, and the worth and respectability of laboring men.

A very large majority of all pupils now attending our schools are destined to earn the greater part of their livelihood by some form of manual labor. If a taste for manual labor and habits of active industry are not formed before the age of about 15 they are seldom formed thereafter. Skilled manual training possesses an educational value equal to any of the ordinary school studies. The hand is educated by the mind and the mind by the hand.

The school advantages of the city boy are superior to those of the country boy, but the latter has his school education supplemented by an industrial education which makes him generally the superior of his city cousin.

There is too much tendency to crowd into the learned professions, and an affection of contempt for honest manual labor.

Here is an extract from a Boston school report:—

It is thought that the tendency of the schools is to give the pupils a distaste for manual occupation; that they are too much stimulated in their school studies by fallacious hopes of obtaining a livelihood in occupations which do not require manual labour.

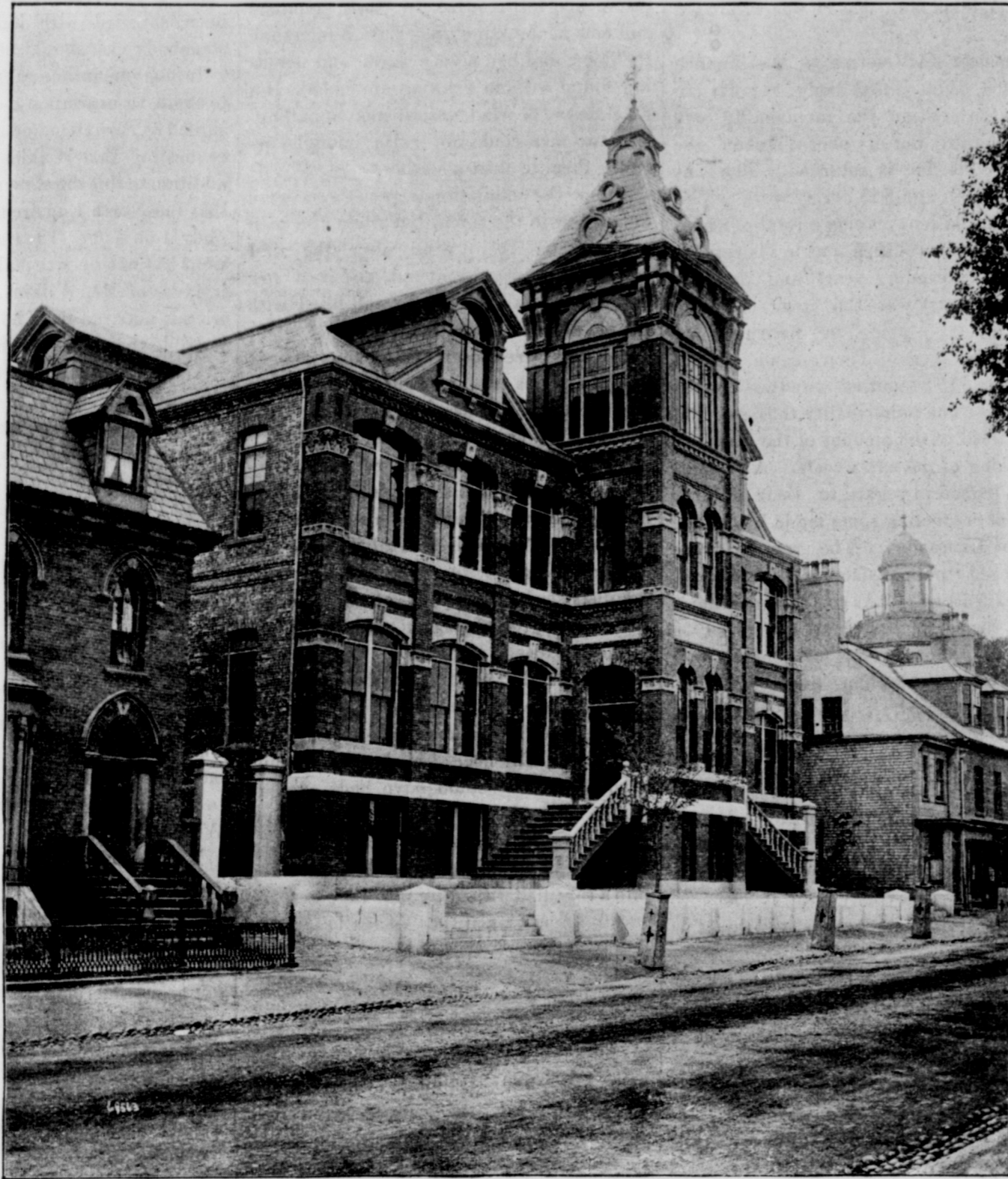
Also one from the St. Louis manual training school, the finest institution of the kind in America. It proposes, "by lengthening the usual school day a full hour, and by abridging somewhat the number of daily recitations, to find time for drawing and tool work, and thus secure a more liberal intellectual and physical development. A more symmetrical education."

And now a word as to the workings of the school in this city, a short article on which, by Prof. Lee Russel, B. Sc., a graduate of the Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, Mass., appeared in the February number of the Educational Review.

Halifax school, where, the most proficient workmen are country lads. Mr. Russel has about 100 boys in training who go to him in classes of 18 each for two hours each week. Those from the academy have only one session at any time, and consequently have their afternoons free. When it is remembered that attendance at the manual training school is purely voluntary, that Halifax boys have inclination and opportunity in common with those of other cities for the usual out-door games and amusements, it is certainly encouraging to find that the classes do not fall off, but that from two to four the room is full of busy, earnest workers.

If this scheme accomplished nothing more than to keep boys off the street for that length of time it would be worthy of consideration.

The benches used are of an improved sort, but can now be made here for about half the cost of the imported ones. Roughly speaking a school of the capacity of the one in this city could be supplied with benches, tools, and a stock of material for



ALEXANDRA SCHOOL.

Since that was written the accommodation has been further increased, and now eighteen benches are used where they began with six. Mr. Russel combines in his method the best features of both the Russian and Swedish systems. The latter, Slojd (sløjd), begins with the knife, and a series of some six or eight articles is made almost exclusively with that instrument. So many adaptations of Slojd are used that the system in its purity is hard to find outside of Sweden.

The original knife is a cross between a case or table knife and a razor in shape, with a thick handle that fills up the hand comfortably. Mr. Russel does not introduce this until the boys have become fairly proficient in the use of the ordinary carpentering tools, and almost the first use to which it is put is to bevel the edges of a bracket, made of perhaps 3/8 inch stuff—about the third article they make. A great deal of attention is given to mechanical drawing. The boys are shown an article to be made. They make a working drawing from drafts, and if drawing was taught in our schools as it is intended and expected to be taught this ought not to be a difficult thing to do. With this working drawing before them the article is made, be it a box, a cross, a picture frame, or what not. The boys are encouraged to make simple articles that they want for themselves, so long as they embrace the principles of construction being taught at the time.

One lad wished to make a book shelf. With Mr. Russel's help he made a sketch of his idea, then set to work at his working plan. By this time, no doubt, the book shelf adorns the wall of his room, a source of just pride and satisfaction to himself and his family, and an incentive to a more ambitious effort next time. Needless to say, everything must be done in the most thorough and finished manner, so an article made under Mr. Russel's supervision is sure to be the best of its kind. This work cannot fail to find its way into the homes and carry with it a refining influence. Take for instance the houses of the poor where broken articles of furniture, rickety doors, noisy, rattling windows, and other disheating things are borne with because of the inability to have them remedied. How a boy fresh from the influence of the workshop will love to repair these things for his mother! Working by rule and measure has an effect on the moral side of a big boy's nature, and induces to habits of neatness and order.

The woods used are chiefly white-wood, bass-wood, ash and cherry, and also pine. These can be worked easily and are not difficult to get. Two boys each week take their turn at the grindstone, and thus learn that important part of a mechanic's work, proper care of tools. To quote from Mr. Russel's article:—"The manual dexterity required properly to sharpen an edge tool can be appreciated only by one who has struggled to acquire the art. A boy who has spent a couple of hours at such work has, beside the skill, a respect for a keen edge, not to be ground in any other way." Mr. McKay's remark concerning town vs. country boys is fully borne out in the

fact that \$350.00; a further yearly outlay of say \$50.00 for the material would keep it running.

Manufacturers are already on the lookout for the boys from these manual training schools. It is claimed that a boy who has had this training can master in two years any trade that would otherwise need four.

May this year see established in Charlottetown, Truro, Amherst, New Glasgow, Moncton, St. John, Fredericton, Chatham and other towns such schools as that described above. Why should they not, can any one give a good reason? F.

THE RICH AND THE POOR.

How the Law is Worked to Fit Them Both.

A few months ago a poor girl was in the pains of childbirth. A week later a parcel was found on Barnes Common. It contained the dead body of a child with a piece of tape tied round its neck. Whether the child ever had any separate existence of its own or not was a matter of conjectural opinion only. So also was the question whether the girl had deliberately taken the child's life or had done she knew not what in the hour of her agony. The one thing that was demonstrably certain was that if the child ever had any separate life at all that life was put an end to with the mercy of instant violence. A few more months passed, and the time came, as Mr. Hardy puts it, for "the woman to pay." The girl was in the dock, and was sentenced to be hung by the neck till she was dead. This sentence was afterwards commuted, and Fanny Gane is now under sentence of penal servitude for life. About the same time a lady, well educated and well-to-do, acting under no pressure of pain and no stress of shame, sat down to a comfortable luncheon, and, having disposed of it at leisure, went upstairs to her child, a little thing not quite three years old. The child had been locked up all the morning in a cupboard room, with no food, no light, and very little air. The mother decided to increase the punishment: the original offence was "loitering in dressing." She pinioned the child's arms behind its back with a stocking as fast as she could, and hung the poor little mite to a ring five feet above its head. Some hours passed; and in the evening the body of the child was found on its mother's bed, naked and dead. This was no isolated act; for the woman had several children, upon whom also she had perpetrated other barbarities. The day of reckoning came on Monday; and, whereas for the painless death of her child Fanny Gane was visited with penal servitude for life, Mrs. Montagu, for her cold-blooded and long-drawn-out cruelty, was sentenced to one year's imprisonment. We suppose it is all right in the eye of the law; just as were those freaks of justice in some notorious offences against property which we set out the other day. But we shall be surprised if the disproportion between the offences and the punishment in the cases which we have just described does not revolt the moral sense of the community.—Pall Mall Budget.

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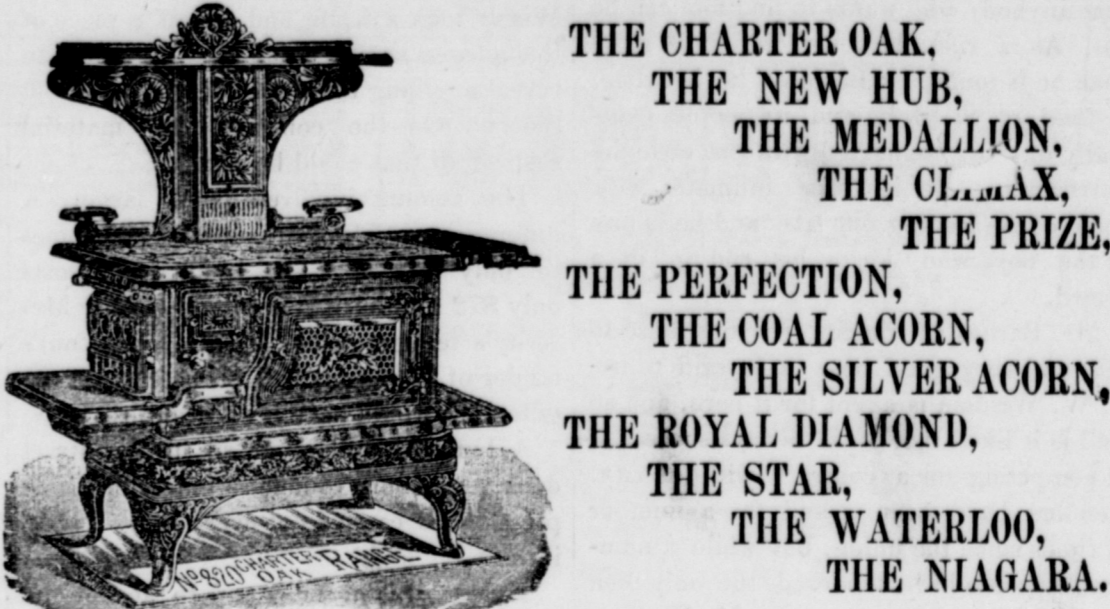
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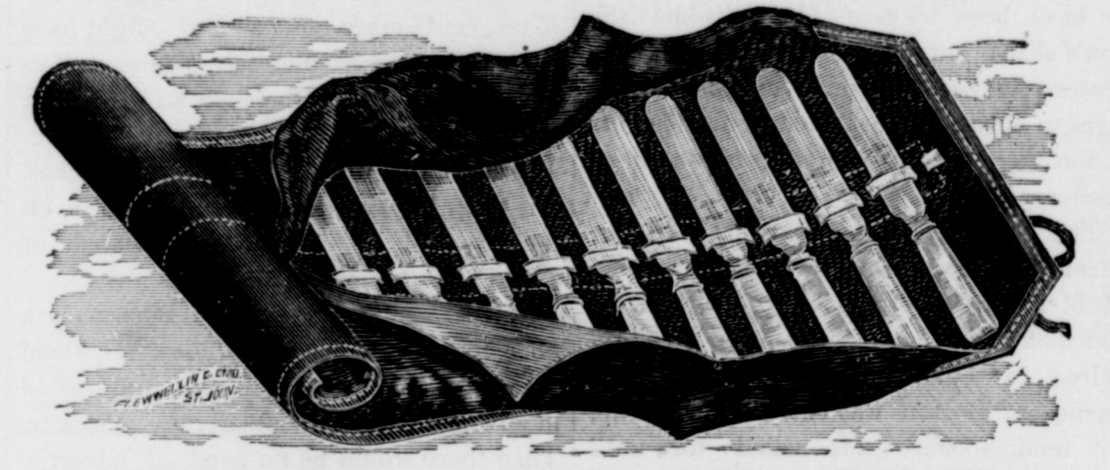
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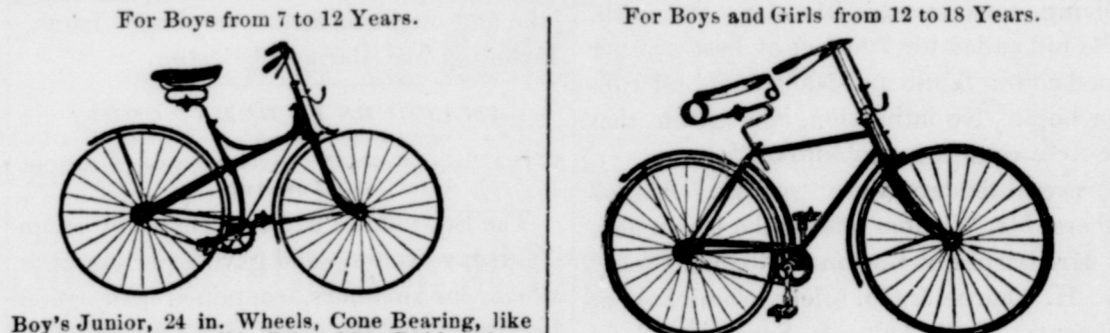
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