

## IS NOT A STAR CHAMBER.

BOSTON SCHOOL MEETS WITH WIDE OPEN DOORS.

The People Pay the Money and Have a Right to the Information. The People are Abused by the Press—The Experience of the Police Commissioners.

Boston, August 13.—That it should be necessary to kick up any great amount of dust in order to have the meetings of the St. John school board made open to the press is somewhat surprising to people in this part of the world, where the war against star chamber sessions of every kind was waged long ago, and is renewed with even greater vigor when an advocate of such proceedings happens to get into office.

The Boston school board is as large a body as the St. John city council, and it has as much, if not more, business to transact. Its meetings are attended by the public and are reported in the newspapers as religiously as the meetings of the board of aldermen. There is no secrecy about them. All business of any importance is transacted in public. The members do not get together and talk over educational matters as they would a tea soiree in their own parlors, such as they do in St. John, if I am to form an opinion from the statements of one member of the board.

Nobody knows what is done in those meetings. I remember going to the secretary many times, some years ago, after the meetings were over and sitting down while he dictated just what he wanted printed and nothing more. If the reporter asked any questions he was quietly but firmly told that was all, that nothing else had been done, notwithstanding the fact that all that had been given out did not make more than a few inches of reading matter and the board had been in session all afternoon.

There is nothing in which the people are, or should be, more interested than the public schools. There is nothing about which they should be more fully informed, and so long as the members of the school board continue to meet in secret session, so must they be looked upon with suspicion long by the public. Everything may be all right and the affairs of the board conducted with the greatest ability and regard for the public welfare, but the people will never accept an excuse for secret session.

One of the reasons I see advanced for not admitting the press is that there are discussions in regard to the qualifications of teachers that should not appear in print. There is not a newspaper man in St. John who does not hold the same view in regard to these discussions, and it is nonsense to say that the papers would think of publishing them, except in a case where something of importance was involved.

I do not know whether the St. John board is divided up into committees, but suppose it is, and in that event all these minor discussions which would not look well in print must necessarily be considered in committee, as they are in other places. But the public should be admitted to all sessions where final action is taken on matters concerning the public schools.

The police commission of Boston held chamber sessions for many years, yet by some strange chance the newspapers always found out and printed all that went on behind the closed doors.

Owing to the difficulty in getting the news it became of more importance, and it was not always correct few could be found who would condemn the newspapers for the mistakes they made. The people believed they had a right to know what was being done by public servants and they appreciated the efforts of the newspapers to keep them informed.

The present chairman of the police board, one of the most progressive and energetic men holding office in this city, and who accomplished more in one year than his predecessors did in five, was in favor of public hearings from the moment he took office, and despite the protests of the majority of the board he finally succeeded, in carrying his point. The result has not been detrimental to the best interests of the department, and the people are beginning to realize that police board hearings are not such horrible things as they were led to suppose when the star chamber rule was in force and all was surrounded by mystery.

Those who are most determined in their opposition to newspaper publicity seem to forget that a paper is more than a private enterprise, that before it becomes worthy of consideration it must first become the representative of the people, to give the people what they want, and look out for their interests.

The days when a newspaper was the organ of one man or set of men are gone forever. The publisher who tries to use his paper for private ends cannot make it a success. Everything depends on circulation, and circulation is the people. With it the publisher can make money and have influence, but the moment he begins to use that influence for private ends and ceases to care for the public welfare that moment he loses his all.

The people take an interest in the newspaper. They watch them much closer than is generally supposed, and anybody who has ever had anything to do with both the editorial and news ends of a paper will bear me out in this statement.

Men such as make up the majority of the

St. John school board perhaps do not realize this. Yet after all it is a fact that the newspaper is the nothing short of the public, and if the people can be trusted the newspapers certainly can.

The newspapers of Canada have not the influence of those in the United States and the principal reason for this is because in Canada the newspaper in most cases is looked upon as an organ. If there was more public spirit in the Canadian press it would have less need for government "pap." As it is now that seems to be the chief end in life of the majority of Canadian publishers. The people recognize this and are lukewarm. When they find a paper that shows some interest in their welfare aside from party politics, they support it.

The great reason for the lack of influence on the part of the St. John papers strikes me as being due to the fact that they do not work for a common interest. They are governed by a spirit of petty jealousy, which, so long as it continues, will enable such men as compose the school board to do as they please without regard to the press or the public.

The American press has had to fight for all it now has, and it has brought about the present condition of affairs by united effort. No matter what party a paper belongs to, no matter what cause it espouses, no matter if the management is at loggerheads with the inestimable contemporary, politically or personally, when the dignity or rights of the press are assailed all the papers are united and they fight until they win.

Down in New Jersey last week some kind of a judge compelled a reporter, under danger of being committed for contempt, to print nothing of the proceedings of a railroad road that had found its way into the courts, and if that particular judge is not feeling sour on himself the newspapers of New Jersey, without exception, without regard to party, creed, political or personal likes or dislikes, have failed in the greatest effort of their existence.

They recognize that something they fought for years ago is now in danger and that it is hard to regain a point once lost.

Mr. John C. Miles, the St. John artist has been in Boston for some weeks meeting old friends, and seeing the sights. He lived in Boston years ago, and many of his pictures are treasured by people who are recognized as critics in the art world. Mr. Miles, while subscribing to a certain extent, to the general sentiment, that "Boston is the only place on earth," is strongly of the opinion that in no section of the continent can the admirer of the beautiful in nature find more to his liking, or the artist more subjects for his pencil and brush than the provinces.

Mr. Joseph S. Wetmore, brother of Mr. E. J. Wetmore of St. John, but for many years a resident of Boston, died at his home in East Boston, last week and a number of relatives from the provinces came up to attend the funeral.

R. G. LARSEN.

## TUNELESS BIRDS IN THE OPEN.

Swift Swallows at Their Daily Work, and Spirit-like Humming Birds.

Now that the earliest golden rods have shown their powdered glory to the sun, and all the fields are bordered with milky carrot blossoms and a dozen other flowers in blue and gold and pink and purple, it is pleasant to stand upon the edge of a bloomy field and watch the conduct of the tuneless birds in the open.

Busiest and swiftest of all are the swallows. It is a lesson in the pace of motion to stand and watch their low skimming, noiseless flight as they wheel and turn and tilt just above the blossoms, weaving, as it were, in their flight, an intricate pattern. Hitler and you they go like tiny slanting crossbows, their flight from end to end of the field, now level as though marked with a surveyor's instrument, now gyrating in a dozen plains, as the birds shoot upward or downward, following, as it seems, some current of west wind air. To watch the play of swallows above a stream or lake is to be half mad with envy of the bird's power to inhabit the air and follow the windings of its invisible currents. The swallow's flight nowadays is not as its earlier summer flight, but it is still the most graceful of all bird motion. One almost refuses to believe that the swallow's flight is a sordid chase of insect food and not merely an expression of his joy in living.

Humming birds, most spirit-like of winged things save, perhaps, the gayer butterfly, from classic times the emblem of the soul, or those rose-pink moths one finds now and then on these days snugly tucked in the calyx of a flower, still make their dainty feasts upon nasturtiums and coral honeysuckles. Trusting to their speed of wing, they are the most fearless of birds. You may sit still beside a box of blooming plants and see the wonders of the humming bird's iridescent back or the tragic beauty of his ruby throat. The humming bird must weight some fraction of an ounce, if one may judge from the way in which he clings to the petal of a nasturtium without snapping the fragile stem of the flower. He loves to come toward dusk, and gets perhaps a special sweetness from blossoms bearing the earliest dew. As his tiny body disappears in the distance and the hum of his wings dies upon the air, one can hardly imagine him going to roost like a crow or any other gross-winged creature.

One prefers to believe his seeming body, but the temporary aspect of a soul that returns to heaven at nightfall, disembodied of its apparent outward self. There is a very beautiful velvety insect that looks like a tiny humming bird, and loves to haunt the splendid purple tuff of the twist, blooming nowadays in silken glory. Both bird and insect dwell within the outskirts of the unreal, baffling and stimulating the imagination with hints of the supernatural.

—N. Y. Sun.

## DANGER TO THE NERVES.

VARIOUS DISORDERS CAUSED BY SPECIAL OCCUPATIONS.

The Relation of Modern Labor to Many of the Diseases of the Nervous System—Certain Effects of Many of the Ordinary Branches of Industry.

Prof. Leonardo Cognetti di Martiis of the University of Turin discourses the relation of labor to nervous diseases. The article is mainly directed to showing that each occupation, mechanical or intellectual, has its peculiar nervous disease, and begins by discussing the perils to the nerves of open-air workers.

Lightning is one of these. Not only does it kill twenty-two persons annually in England and seventy-one in France, but it leaves with shattered nerves many who escape death from the stroke. So of electricity used in various industries. A severe shock from electricity is always liable to produce important nervous changes in the victim. The malarial fevers of which many open-air workers, especially agricultural laborers, are exposed are followed in many cases by severe nervous disorders, and there is a true rural paralysis resulting from these fevers. Tetanus, which is commoner among the agriculturists than elsewhere, because the germ that produces the disease is often found in swampy ground, is followed by shocking nervous manifestations. Sunstroke often leaves its victim a prey to painful nervous disorders, and the peasant in the open fields, under the intense light of the summer sky, often suffers from nervous afflictions of the eye and more serious disturbances. Reflected light, as from snow, sometimes produces the familiar snow blindness, a nervous affection of the eye. It was once epidemic in southern Russia after a March snow storm. One form of the disturbance makes the victim practically blind toward sunset and after twilight. Foundrymen are subject to this form of the disease.

Miners, from an opposite cause, have painful nervous afflictions of the eye, accompanied with strange illusions, such as the apparent swaying back and forth of object in the field of vision. Miners working in mountain shafts have the so-called mountain sickness, accompanied by headache, writhing of the body, hesitancy of movement, heart affections, nausea and vomiting, sometimes followed by insensibility, delirium, and coma. All these manifestations are to be ascribed, in part at least, to the rarefaction of oxygen. Aeronauts have the same trouble. Even worse are the nervous disorders that attack men who continue under high atmospheric pressure. The voice becomes metallic, utterance is difficult, and in the case of some sounds impossible; hearing is impaired, muscles are knotted, and smell and taste are sometimes lost, while the laborer handles his tools with difficulty. Seaisickness is a nervous affection that has a remarkable medical history and for which no satisfactory remedy has been found.

Neurasthenia in many forms is the enemy of intellectual workers. The modern school often brings children to epilepsy and St. Vitus's dance. Stammering sometimes comes from mental overwork, and while a large proportion of children enter school with sound eyes, near-sight is quickly developed and found to increase regularly as the child advances from class to class. With this comes an actual weakening of the visual power at all distances. Headache, uncertainty of physical movement, sudden alternations of hot and cold, insomnia, and fleeting hallucinations are some of the results of too much mental labor in the case of children.

Business men engaged in speculative occupations are subject to neurasthenia, that manifests itself in the loss of the power of mental application. Madness often follows. Labor-saving machinery has resulted in making workmen work harder than ever with their nerves, and in severe nervous disorder among those who tend machines. The speed of modern machinery seems limited only by the power of the human attendant, and a constant strain of attention at a monotonous occupation tends to mental breakdown. Pain and cramp of the muscles, accompanied by forms of neuralgia, are some of the disturbances that afflict the modern mechanical worker, driven by the pressure of his inanimate fellow worker. The intense preoccupation and great mental speed of the piano player often produces paresis. Clarinet players have spasms of the tongue. Sewing machine makers, telegraphers, cigarmakers, button-makers, and others required to maintain high speed at their work are subject to like nervous disturbances immediately affecting the part of the body especially under strain, but extending to other parts. Dentist's leg is a paralytic affection of parts kept long under pressure. Paralysis of the larynx comes to the man that has one arm constantly plying a tool of the striking kind. It affects the right arm, and the right eye is often sympathetically affected. Even the speech is impaired.

The professional bicyclist is subject to shocking nervous maladies. Two phenomena are especially marked in his case, excessive weariness and a mental or perhaps moral deterioration that makes him easily subject to suggestion. There is progressive loss of the power of attention, of critical sense, of judgment, and of all the higher psychic manifestations. The professor evidently has some doubt as to the advisability of bicycling for women, save in very moderate fashion.

Persons accustomed to use the voice a great deal are subject to laryngeal spasms. Watch-makers and others using strong magnifying glasses become near-sighted. Workers amid strong odors, pleasant or otherwise, lose the sense of smell, as others lose that of hearing in noisy occupations. The mechanic workers more subject to nervous diseases are carters, coachmen,

omnibus and street-car conductors, fruit sellers, peripatetic vendors, tobacco dealers and workers, chemists, druggists, sewing-machine workers, stationers, booksellers, printers, lithographers and makers of fireworks.

The Professor's list of employments in which the raw material or the finished product is deleterious to health and especially injurious to the nerves of the worker includes gas making, coke burning, dynamite manufacturing, brandy making, tanning, well digging, chemical works of various sorts, working in the more volatile metals, and a dozen other occupations. The nervous injury extends all the way from slight affections of some single organ to loss of essential powers, mental and physical. Some of the peculiar poisons thus absorbed into the system produce in some victims a tendency to foolish gaiety, in others sleepiness, dulness, loss of memory, impairment of sight and hearing, and convulsions. Men employed in some chemical works lose sensitiveness of skin and are consequently unable to do any delicate manual task. The vapor of petroleum constantly inhaled has a narcotic effect. Finally, men exposed to violent shock, such as often comes to railway employees, are likely to suffer from severe nervous changes, attending at times with impairment of vision or with general nervous breakdown, superinduced in part, no doubt, by the constant nervous strain of their responsibility.

## A Land Without Animals.

Japan is a land without the domestic animals. It is this lack which strikes the stranger so forcibly in looking upon Japanese landscapes. There are no cows—the Japanese neither drink milk or eat meat. There are but few horses, and these are imported mainly for the use of foreigners. The freight carts in city streets are pulled and pushed by coolies, and the pleasure carriages are drawn by men. There are but few dogs, and these are neither used as watch dogs, beasts of burden, nor in hunting, except by foreigners.

There are no sheep in Japan, and wool is not used in clothing, silk and cotton being staples. There are no pigs—pork is an unknown article of diet, and lard is not used in cooking. There are no goats, or mules, or donkeys. Wild animals there are, however, and in particular bears of enormous size. One of these Mr. Finch saw, stuffed, in a museum, he describes as "big as an ox." Besides another stuffed museum bear is preserved, in alcohol, the mangled body of a child the bear had just eaten before being killed.

War, of course, is acquainting the Japanese with the use of animals. The army has cavalry horses, and others to drag the field guns. The Empress, also, in obvious imitation of European royalty, is an expert horsewoman, and saddle horses are kept for her use.—New York Recorder.

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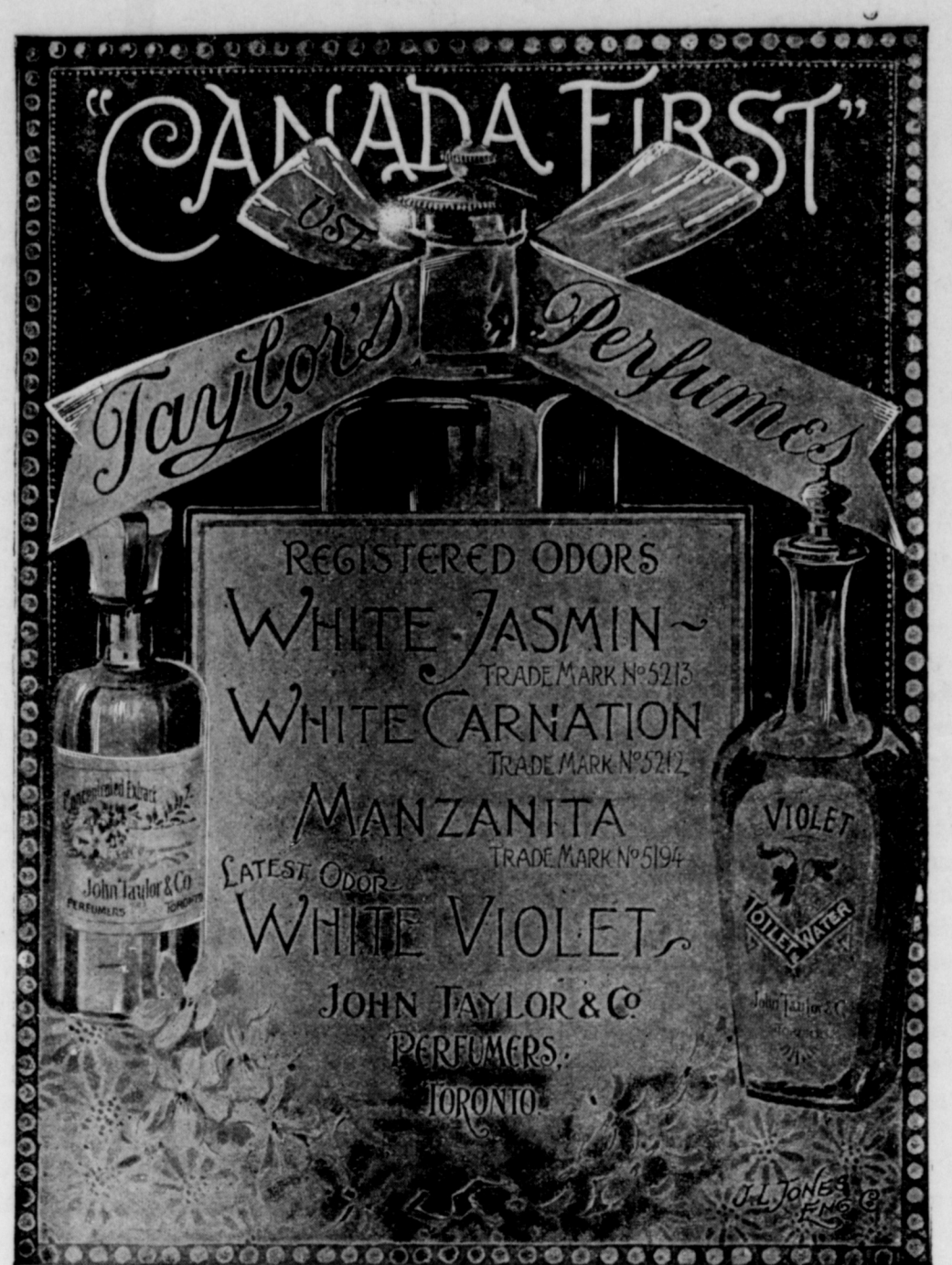
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