

Educational Notes

By SPECTATOR

Under the Hon. Mr. Parr, Minister of Education in New Zealand, there is no danger of stagnation in the schools of that very interesting British community. A system of teacher exchange with other parts of the empire has been carefully planned and put into operation. An able school inspector has been sent to Great Britain to spend eighteen months in inspectorial work and investigation. Meantime Inspector N. R. McKenzie, recently returned from Canada, is officially employed in the widespread diffusion of ideas gathered in his two years' absence from home. One of his latest occupations has been the measurement of intelligence in all the secondary schools of the Dominion by means of the standardized tests in use in the United States and Canada. It is claimed that we have here the first nation-wide application of the principle. A record of the results will make interesting reading.

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There are in the United States five millions of people ten years of age or upwards who cannot read or write in any language. Under conditions such as these the great American republic is not "safe for democracy." Democracy and illiteracy cannot exist together: they are mutually destructive forces in the body politic. If, therefore, democracy finds no way of putting an end to illiteracy, illiteracy will surely undermine the foundations of democracy and ultimately destroy it. Semblance of government by an illiterate mob is anarchy but thinly disguised. In the years to come immigrants by the hundred thousand will pass into Canada. However it be with the parents, only at national peril can we neglect to educate and Canadianize every member of the rising generation, whatever be his national or racial origin. We must sedulously care for the stranger within our gates, if our own children are to be safe.

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Democracy in any community fails in so far as it does not provide equal opportunity for all. This principle is becoming apparent to many millions of thinking American people. Hence the growing demand for the establishment of a national department of education at Washington, to grapple with great educational evils such as the continued toleration of the sin of illiteracy. This movement has the warm approval of President Coolidge. Some states of the American republic are immensely wealthy; others are comparatively poor. It is the recognized duty of the strong to help the weak. Patriotic Americans are therefore looking forward to the time when Congress shall make large grants of money to assist popular education in the states least able to help themselves. Inequality of opportunity means social cleavage, simply another phase of the destructive tendency against which Lincoln waged incessant war, and which on his lips found expression in the pregnant words, "A house divided against itself cannot stand," the theme of speech after speech in the campaign which swept him into the presidency, set free millions of slaves, earned for him the crown of martyrdom, and gave him a sure place in the galaxy of the Immortals.

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From time to time the cry is heard that education is being overdone, that secondary education is engaging the attention of far too many of our boys and girls,

and that the closing of many university doors would be a distinct gain. For every teacher's position becoming vacant there are ten applicants; clergymen, forced out of the pulpit by the newer product of theological colleges, are jostling one another in eager attempts to enter other avenues of occupation; physicians and lawyers are starving for want of patients and clients; even engineers, in an undeveloped country like Canada, stand all the day idle in the market-places of labor, for no man has hired them.

There is apparently too much truth in some or all of these assertions regarding an overcrowded labor market. Nevertheless the conclusions of the critics may be wrong. Present world conditions are abnormal. We are still reaping the harvest of the Great War. We can hardly claim, as yet, that we are enjoying the blessings of peace. Economic well-being is conditioned on political well-being; and though progress in political settlement is being made, and the outlook is brightening, we have still far to go to reach the haven where we would fain be. Till that time unemployment in the ranks of professionals, skilled mechanics and unskilled laborers will be all too common.

In the second place, the surplus in some lines of labor may be more apparent than real. With better distribution the apparent surplus might disappear. From time immemorial population has gravitated from country to town. At present in some Canadian cities one might seek out scores of clergymen unemployed or engaged in purely secular labor. At the same time the fields in many a foreign land are white to the harvest. In the sparsely settled areas in our own country many a community has had no chance in years to listen to a gospel sermon. In our cities, large and small, and even in country places, educative and redemptive work could be found in plenty for the social worker. Consecrated wealth could find employment for all ministerial laborers worth their salt.

Similarly in the case of the physician. During an epidemic work may be found for every practitioner in a city; but in normal times genteel poverty is likely to be the lot of some. At the same time many unfortunates in remote places may die "without the aid of a physician." Such is the rule in those parts where the light of Christianity burns as yet but dimly.

In spite also of the terrible overcrowding of our normal schools, our educational authorities sometimes experience difficulty in finding a teacher ready to share the inconveniences and privations of pioneer life.

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