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The Man and the Child

THE importance of the child in the eyes of most people, depends upon the name of the parents. If the parents are our friends and have money, the children are "most interesting." If their parents are unknown or are mere labourers in this world of labour, the children are too often "brats" or little "nuisances."

Few of us will admit that we hold such a view. Indeed, few of us are frank enough to look our pet opinions in the eye. We do a lot of blinking in our self-examinations. The greatest need in the way of honesty is the sort that will enable us to look at ourselves, our beliefs, our habits of thought and peculiarities without excusing them.

Not many children in this country need bread, but they all need education, training and culture. The state must give these because ignorance and vice may be eradicated from the human race only while it is yet in the child-stage. The good citizen must be caught young. The hope for the future of any country lies in the training of its youth. Neglect the children for a generation and pandemonium follows.

These are generalisations. To be specific: the systems of education in Canada are not keeping up with the times. They are better than they were fifty years ago, but they are not good enough. The child of to-day is born to turbines, electric generators, automobiles, telephones and gigantic financial corporations. That child has a great battle ahead of him as compared with that which faced us of an earlier generation, much greater than that which our grandfathers faced. The education of one generation will not suit the next. The child of to-day must possess a mental dexterity at twelve nearly equal to that of his father at thirty. I have spent nearly forty years learning something about electricity; my child at twelve knows nearly as much as I do. He was born into the electric age; I was born just before it.

As a producer, the child must have greater skill; as a citizen, he needs even greater mental equipment. As the problems of production become complex, so do the problems of government and statesmanship. We support technical education to get better mechanics; let us support the teaching of civics to get better citizens.

What would happen if the Dominion Government were to set aside one-tenth of all its revenues to assist

in the teaching of civics to future citizens? Would that eliminate electoral corruption, the misuse of government patronage, and the score of political evils from which we suffer? It might not drive out all of these, but it would transform Canadian political life in a generation. Civics are taught now, but only in an elementary form. Neither the word nor the ideas behind it are directly mentioned in the educational programme of any one of the nine Provinces.

Ontario is endeavouring to reorganise its educational system. The older teachers and inspectors of the Province are a splendid set of men but antiquated. With a dozen or so exceptions, they had better all be superannuated. The report of the text-book commission lays the blame for the present disgraceful school books on the backs of these principals and inspectors. For years the claim has been made that Ontario has the finest edu-

cational system in the world. This is not true. It has a very indifferent system if the revelations are to be believed—and the people groan because Dr. Pyne is laying on them the great burden of re-organisation.

The other provinces are struggling with the educational problem, and apparently with just as little sympathy on the part of the taxpayer. The men and the women whose children are grown up and those who never have contributed children to the state are standing back and shouting "faddism," "extravagance," and other terms indicating their own selfishness. Their highest aim, one fears, is selfish aggrandisement, not the good of the state. They have little pride in their citizenship and know little of that patriotism which animates the man who is thoroughly inspired by

an intense and thoughtful loyalty to the institutions, principles and ideals of the nation. What progress would the country make if it were not for the faddist (so-called), the idealist, and the reformer?

Some of these statements may seem strong, but there is need of an educational awakening in Canada. The problem of keeping educational facilities up-to-date is one which is ever present. Higher education is making even more progress than elementary education; those in charge of the colleges and universities have been more progressive and more persistent in their methods of development. It is in the public schools where the needs seem greatest, where efficiency and simplification are most required.



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