

# The Commercial

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## EDUCATION.

Considerable discussion has been provoked in Winnipeg of late regarding our educational system. It is felt by many that the cost of keeping up our educational system is to great. The wisdom of providing higher education at the expense of the state, has been called in question much of late, in many parts of Canada, and the feeling seems to be gaining ground that the state should be satisfied when it provides a good primary education. There is good reason to believe that our educationists have been going ahead too fast, and have built up a top-heavy system. In establishing an elaborate and expensive system of higher education, it is just possible that they have neglected what is of vastly more importance to the country—the perfecting of a thorough and practical system of education suitable for the masses of the people in everyday life. The great object of education should be to impart practical knowledge to the rising generation. This is what has been lost sight of to too great an extent by our educationists. Of course the young people cannot learn to be skilled mechanics at school; but their education should be of such a nature as to serve them to the very best possible advantage, in preparing them for some useful position in after life. It is the complaint of some who have given the question much intelligent thought, that our system has a tendency even somewhat the opposite of this. It operates to encourage young people to attain a high education, but in so doing they are unfitted for the ordinary positions of life. Certainly there are many useless persons in the world who have attained a high position in education. This, however, proves nothing; for there are perhaps many more useless individuals who can scarcely read or write. At the same time, there seems to be some reason for the belief that the encouragement of higher education is depleting the farm and the workshop, and unduly multiplying the ranks of the professions, or adding to the increasing list of those who are said "to live by their wits." If we admit for the sake of argument that the tendency of higher education is to rob the farm, etc., the unwisdom of offering encouragement to this end is at once apparent. Instead of increasing taxation to provide free education of the highest order, the interest of the state would be to discourage higher education for the masses. A mechanic with an M. A. or B. A. attached to his name should not be regarded as a monstrosity. If the world could attain to the ideal of some of our educationists, we would all have the liberty of wearing such titles, which would then cease to be a mark of distinction. In theory, there is nothing incompatible in the possession of higher education by the farmer or the mechanic, but in practice we know that it does not work that way. A good, every-day, practical education seems really more suitable for the ordinary walks of life, and the mind that has been crammed with

literature, mathematics and the long list of dogmas, is very likely to be somewhat unbigged for following the plow or wielding the blacksmith's hammer.

Really the great need of the age, educationally, is for reform in the direction of providing more practical education for the masses. Where the state has provided a good practical education in the ordinary branches, and makes this education compulsory upon all young people, providing a way for all to attain it, it is as much as can be expected. Instead of increasing expenditure to provide free higher education, attention should be directed to the education to a moderate extent of the orphans, the waifs or others who from one cause or another are liable to have their rudimentary education neglected. This is the true duty of the state. Higher education, which it is claimed takes young people from the farm and the workshop, could be well neglected by the state, in favor of providing means for the education of those whose education would otherwise be entirely neglected. If the energy now spent in building up a top heavy and expensive system of higher education, were directed to the securing of a good common education for the neglected ones, the interest of the state would be vastly conserved, and crime, viciousness, misery and poverty would be greatly reduced. The imparting of a good common education to one young person who would otherwise grow up an ignorant, is of more importance to the state than the higher education of a number of citizens. At any rate, higher education would not suffer if the state should go out of the business. There are now many excellent colleges and other private institutions competing with the state in the work of higher education, and there are ample means of obtaining higher education for all those who have the ability and inclination to acquire it, outside of the state schools.

Altogether it seems reasonable to believe that the state should be satisfied with providing a good common education, such as is suitable for the masses. Those who desire to go up higher, should look more to their own exertions to obtain this higher education. The energy and expenditure now applied to higher education by the state, could, as we have pointed out, be applied to the education of those who are being entirely neglected, with better results to the community at large.

Even in the primary divisions of the public schools of the cities, there might be room for a reduction in the list of studies. As the primary schools are now constituted, the object seems to be mainly to crowd the pupils through a sort of preparatory course for the higher branches. If the state undertook only to give a good primary education, more attention would doubtless be paid to making this education thorough and practical. As the system is now established, however, the primary schools are merely stepping stones to the higher divisions, in which the pupils are given a smattering of a considerable list of studies. The shortening of the list of studies, and a more thorough and practical drilling in the remaining ones, would be to the advantage of the majority of pupils. This spreading of the list

of studies in the primary divisions, is an outgrowth of the system of higher education by the state.

In conclusion we repeat that we cannot but believe that what is required of the public school system is provision for a more practical and thorough education of a primary nature, with special energy directed toward the education of those who are growing up in ignorance, leaving the higher field to individual or private effort. After a good primary education has been obtained, what is of infinitely more importance to the vast majority of young people is technical education, to fit them for the practical duties of life and make them useful citizens of the state. These remarks will apply in a general way to the discussion which has been going on in Winnipeg of late regarding the Collegiate institute.

## TRADE WITH BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Manitoba is not supplying as much produce to Pacific coast markets as was shipped from here a couple of years ago. We have of late increased competition in Australian products, which are finding their way into Canadian Pacific coast markets since the establishment of the Canadian-Australian Steamship Line. The growth of settlement in western portions of the territories, is also increasing competition in the coast markets. During the last two years, since the opening of that portion of Alberta territory north of Calgary to Edmonton, quite a number of settlers have gone into that region, which is well adapted for agricultural settlement, and recently they have begun to ship considerable produce to British Columbia. Within a few years northern Alberta will be almost able alone to supply our Pacific coast cities with such quantities of butter, eggs, grains, etc., as they may require over local supplies. Of course, considerable stuff is still going to the coast from Manitoba, including butter, cheese, eggs, flour, feed, grain, oil cake, meats, live stock, etc., but in some lines, particularly butter and oats, new western competition has tended to reduce the demand from the eastern and older settled portions of the prairie belt. If the northern Alberta settlers are given freight rates comparatively the same as Manitoba in proportion to distance, they will of course have considerable advantage over the eastern districts, as they are considerably nearer the coast than any part of Manitoba. As the western people, however, have a much higher freight to pay on their eastern shipments, Manitoba cannot reasonably grudge them any advantages they may secure in the coast markets.

Another feature which the producers of the prairie country must take into consideration in considering trade with British Columbia, is the possibility of further reductions in the tariff. Most of the products which we ship to the coast cities can be obtained more cheaply by British Columbians from the states to the south of them, so far as first cost and freight is concerned. The cost of freight from Pacific coast points in the United States to British Columbia is trifling in comparison with the freight rates from Manitoba and the territories to the coast. At the present time the duties on these pro-