

THE ONTARIO EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT.

A curious and vexatious question has been raised with reference to the Public School Readers. These, it will be remembered, have hitherto been published under a contract with three leading Toronto firms. The peculiarities of the conditions under which this contract was made will be fresh in the minds of many readers. As its term will shortly expire, it has been announced that the publication of the Readers will henceforth be open to the publishing trade. But now comes the statement that many of the poems and extracts which are given in these books are used without the consent of the holders of the British copyrights covering those selections, and that at least one of the firms whose copyright was, it is alleged, thus infringed upon, has filed, or is about to file, a claim for damages. It is very unlikely that anything more than nominal damages would be awarded by any court, for it could not be difficult to show that the advantages the owners of the copyrights derive from the indirect advertisement their books receive through the publication of extracts or selections in the School Readers, and through the creation of a taste for such works by the study of such selections in the schools, must far outweigh any loss that could possibly accrue from the effect of such publication in reducing the sales of their books. Nevertheless, should it prove that the Minister, or the Committee which made the selections, neglected to secure the permission of the holders of copyrights of the works of authors thus quoted, it is not unlikely that the latter may be able to prevent the further sale of the books until some settlement is reached. The raising of the question after so many years, and only when the contract is about to run out, gives rise to the suspicion that the two things may be in some way connected. No indirect pressure of the kind indicated should avail to secure the continuance of a monopoly injurious to the public, however much the singular short-sightedness which created the difficulty is to blame, or however costly the blunder may prove. It may indeed prove very costly should it appear that the High School Readers and Patriotic Recitations—the latter not being an authorized book, the loss would fall, we suppose, on the publishers—have been compiled with the same disregard of both copyright requirements and common courtesy.

This incident may have a good effect in directing attention afresh to the evils of the monopolistic system adopted by the Education Department in the publication of school text-books. Mr. Gage, the head of one of the firms which have profited, it is believed very largely, by the contract for the publication of the School Readers, asks very pertinently, in a letter to the *Globe*, why the Readers should be selected as the only authorized school-books whose publication is

unblushing a manner as just now by a certain firm of manufacturers of chemicals in a Pennsylvania town. The firm in question, the Kesbey & Mattison Company, of Ambler, has posted in its works a public notice to its employees, requesting those of them who are in sympathy with the Wilson Bill to hand in their resignations to the Superintendent. The justification attempted for this outrageous attack upon the political rights and liberties of those who are supposed to be in the power of the Company, is that "it is only fair to their fellow-employees that, as the work grows less, it shall be done by those men who are not responsible for the present deplorable condition of economic affairs." Even were it admitted or provable that the proposed tariff-reform is to a greater or less extent the cause of the "deplorable condition of economic affairs," no more forcible proof of the unwisdom and injustice of the protective system could be needed than would be supplied in the two cognate facts, first, that that system has resulted in making the industries of the country so dependent upon the fluctuations of Congressional legislation that the probability of a change in the tariff lawscan throw the whole business of the country into confusion and bring millions to poverty and destitution; and second, that it can give to powerful firms so strong a selfish interest in the retention of high protection as to make the less scrupulous ready to resort to such tactics to deprive large numbers of their fellow-citizens of political freedom. Happily, short-sighted measures of this kind are pretty sure to help the cause they are intended to injure. The freedom-loving instincts of the masses will resent such intimidation, and recoil from the political system which prompts employers to attempt it. But, as in other cases, there will be great danger that in the recoil many may be carried to the other extreme. The pendulum will not stop when it has returned to the perpendicular. As the "Outlook" says, "such a public notice as the Kesbey & Mattison Company has posted in its works will do more to make socialists than a score of socialistic newspapers could do in a score of years. If the working-people of this country should once be persuaded that the Government must own the manufactories or that working-people must surrender their political franchise, the day of State Socialism would not be far off."

When thy brother has lost all that he ever had, and lies languishing, and even gasping under the utmost extremities of poverty and distress, dost thou think to lick him whole again only with thy tongue?—South.

The shores of Lake Michigan, once dotted with towns and with natural features bearing beautiful old French names bestowed by the early settlers, are now distinguished for a heterogeneous nomenclature. Scores of the French names survive in varying conditions of corruption, but with them are associated old Indian names, dozens of English names, and others taken from the Spanish, Dutch, Irish, German, Italian and even the Russian.

If the sensational reports cabled from England by the correspondents of certain American papers, notably the New York *Sun*, were to be accepted as reliable, we should be forced to believe that the Mother Country is on the eve of a terrible war. Happily there seems to be no sufficient reason for regarding these telegrams as other than sensational. True, the correspondents are able to quote the London *Telegraph* in support of their alarming statements. But a more reliable criterion of well-informed public opinion than any newspaper is afforded by the state of the money market, and this the correspondents are obliged to admit shows no sign of serious disturbance. Another strange fact about the alarming announcement is that they fail to make clear what is the ground of quarrel, or even what nation or nations are to make the attack. So far as appears, England's only possible foes at present are France and Russia, and neither has given any indication of hostile intentions. There is, it is true, evidence of no little popular dislike for England on the part of the French, but no French statesman worthy of the name would be guilty of the suicidal folly of forcing a war upon England, with the members of the Triple Alliance, armed to the teeth, as interested on-lookers. The very fact that Great Britain is holding herself aloof from alliances, and maintaining a position of independence, is her best safeguard. Neither of the two great divisions of the European Powers, which are now straining their resources to the verge of bankruptcy in the equipment of rival armies and fleets, would be rash enough to do anything which might have the effect of pushing Great Britain into the arms of its foes, seeing that the weight of her sword, thrown into either scale, would send the other to the beam in an instant. As for the British themselves, to their honour be it spoken, not even their bitterest enemies can suspect them of cherishing any belligerent designs, or not being honestly and ardently desirous of lasting peace. It has long been taken for granted that the enormous armaments of the hostile European Powers must sooner or later compel a trial of strength, but it seems sometimes as if there may be a dawning possibility that the very vastness of the preparations on both sides, and the terrible consequence of an uncertain conflict, may cause both parties to hesitate until internal forces in one nation or another may compel a settlement, or precipitate a catastrophe, in some other way. At any rate, now that the newspapers and sensation-mongers are on the alert, we may safely deduct a very large percentage from the cablegrams of excited correspondence for some time to come.

There is often too good evidence of effective interference by employers of labour with the political freedom of their employees, but rarely is this attempted in so bold and