

EDUCATIONAL REVIEW

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EDITORIAL

Menace of Illiteracy. Many social problems which we formerly considered a trifle vexing, have with our enlarged experience and deepened insight gained from the war, grown to problems of prodigious size and alarming significance. Our realization that democratic ideals and government are dependent for their preservation upon the good will of the individual citizen and the dangers and instability which lurk in dependence upon the masses have made us realize the place of education in a democracy. One writer has said, "Illiteracy, ignorance, prejudice, indifference and selfishness, when prevailing in a country under a democratic constitution, make democracy itself a menace." Education is the only safeguard against these evils.

What are the facts regarding illiteracy in the Maritime Provinces? According to the census returns of 1911 there are 94,332 persons in these provinces who can neither read nor write in any language. The proportions are as follows: in Prince Edward Island 8 persons out of every hundred of the inhabitants; in Nova Scotia, 10 persons out of every hundred, and in New Brunswick 14 persons out of every hundred. These returns are ominous in their portents. We are not considering a population which is swollen by the presence of many foreigners. The majority of the inhabitants are native born English and French. Yet there are in these provinces nearly 95,000 people who can neither read nor write any language.

Surely this is a serious indictment against our educational responsibility in these provinces. Such facts must not be shelved, they must be faced. Each provincial government must meet this problem squarely and at once. The strength which education yields an autocracy has been proven by Germany's resistance in the war. If government by the one can through education be supported by all, how much more potent and indispensable must education be in a Democracy, where government is "of the people, for the people and by the people."

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