

Twelve months ago we had the satisfaction of recording the celebration in this city of the first Labour Day. In France, the Comte de Mun and other earnest-minded men of the Royalist and Clerical party, had the foresight to anticipate the movement from which this festival has sprung, and to claim for it the sympathy of the Church. It was not difficult, indeed, to show the essential harmony that exists between every form of useful labour and the religion of Him of whom it was said that He went about doing good and who came of a stock of artisans. One of the most pathetic of modern paintings brings out the intimate relationship between the Jesus who wrought the earliest disciples—including even the "Prince of the Apostles"—were, moreover, of the class of workingmen. In proposing, therefore, that a festival should be held in honour of Jesus the Labourer, there was really nothing irreverent. It was bringing the spirit of religion into the workman's daily life. Labour Day is virtually the same festival, divested of any religious significance, save what pertains to all honest work. Its aim is to deepen the sentiment of union, sympathy and coöperation among all branches of labour, and also to increase the honour and prestige of skilled work by showing the extent of its ramifications and the number of interests and more complex every day. In industries that once implied a single trade, half a dozen departments of skilled labour are now necessary. The main distinctions still remain, indeed, but the mysteries (*métiers*) have multiplied to such an extent that the old tradesman who knew and practised all the details of his trade is gradually becoming obsolete. This subdivision of labour is in the natural course of industrial development. It tends, however, to make those to whom the various tasks of the divided calling are assigned less independent and more in need of mutual help. Hence the greater necessity for union and organization. At first the trades-union was a cause of apprehension, but the fears that attended its birth and early career have long been dissipated. During the last twenty years the movement has spread through a great part of the Old World and the New, and under some form or other labour is now organized in every civilized country in both hemispheres. As long as the leaders of these organizations are men of good principles, as well as of superior intelligence, the cause of human progress can only benefit by their existence.

The establishment in this city of a Humane Society, which is intended to assume the responsibility of assigning suitable recognition to bravery and fortitude in saving life and other forms of merit will, we believe, be generally hailed with satisfaction throughout the Dominion. It is proposed that the new organization shall take the place of the British Royal Humane Society as far as Canada is concerned. Hitherto when acknowledgment was claimed for any of the virtues which the English institution is always glad to recognise, a certain amount of trouble has been experienced in bringing the facts under the notice of the officers. In many cases, through the reluctance of individuals specially concerned to take the needed steps, through unfortunate delay in making the circumstances known or through ignorance on the part of witnesses that such a society existed, acts of humane courage have either gone without due recognition or have remained unknown beyond the locality that benefited by them. It is naturally expected that the existence in the Dominion of a distinct Canadian society, one of whose duties it will be to take cognizance of displays of heroism that might otherwise pass unregarded, will stimulate the spirit of humane self-devotion by ascribing honour in all cases to whom honour is due. As Mr. F. Wolfertan Thomas pointed out, it is not likely that any one will risk his life in the service of others purely for the sake of reward, either in the shape of praise or of more substantial recompense. But the knowledge that bravery and humanity entitle those who exercise such virtues to the esteem of their fellowmen, and that there

exists in Canada a society authorized to give formal expression to the public admiration and gratitude for timely service in the cause of humanity, cannot fail to have a fruitful influence on the national sentiment and character. The Canadian Humane Society will, moreover, set the seal of popular approval on the whole sisterhood of virtues implied by its name. It will be the foe of cruelty in every shape and the advocate of mercy to "man and bird and beast." It will also be a centre of authority and coöperation for all kindred societies which already exist throughout the country, and will, doubtless, be affiliated to it.

### THE GREAT MISTAKE.

Considerable surprise has, it seems, been occasioned by the statement, recently published by Mr. DeCazes, of the Education Department, that in a large number of the primary schools of this province French is not among the branches of instruction taught to the pupils. It appears, in fact, that out of a total of 939 such institutions no French is taught in 770 Protestant and 68 Catholic schools. In other words, there are 838 public schools subsidized by the Government in which the teaching of French is wholly neglected. To those who have not been in the habit of reading the reports of the Minister of Education this announcement has naturally been a revelation. From the comments of some of the papers, both French and English, it appears to have been taken for granted hitherto that, in the elementary as well as in the higher schools, French was regularly taught. That such a notion could have prevailed can only be explained by the general indifference of the public to the working of our educational system. Those who have been in the habit of reading the reports of the inspectors, included from year to year in the Report of the Superintendent of Education, can hardly have fallen into such a mistake. The truth of the matter is that not only is French not taught in a large number of the schools (as M. de Cazes has just made known) but it would be strange, when the salaries allotted to the teachers are taken into account, if even the mother tongue of the pupils and the ordinary branches of instruction were taught with anything like efficiency. The plan by which the teacher, on whom devolves the most arduous of the educator's tasks, that of laying the groundwork of the child's intellectual development, is assigned the humblest of all stations and the poorest of pittances, is the gravest mistake in educational methods. If education has any significance at all, the period in the career of the pupil at which it demands the ripest knowledge of the attributes and processes of the human mind and the most delicate and judicious application of that knowledge is when the school-book is first put into the child's hand and the habit of attention begins to be formed. When young people are fortunate enough to have parents whose manners, habits and conversation are exemplary and edifying, they are, to a certain extent, independent of the influence of the teachers. To them the domestic and social *milieu* in which they live is the best training for those tender years. But, unhappily, it is not, as a rule, from the class that comprises such exemplary households that the pupils of the elementary school are derived. Many of them are dependent on the teacher and their school associations not merely for the rudiments of knowledge, but for whatever refining and elevating influences go to the shaping of their lives. The impressions they receive in the class-room—the language they hear daily, the tone of thought, the inflection of voice—must permanently affect their characters for good or evil. If the teacher is illiterate and vulgar and barely capable, by gifts and acquirements, of perfunctorily discharging a certain routine of ill-paid drudgery, it would be strange if the pupils did not suffer morally and intellectually from such an example. If at home there should be no counter-acting influence—if faults of manner, temper and speech were of constant occurrence—it could hardly be wondered at if the child's small gains in elementary instruction were more than counter-balanced by the unconscious imitation of very

serious defects. At a later stage of education, the pupil, whose character and habits have been formed by careful training and improving intercourse, may perceive and avoid the defects, while profiting by the erudition, of his teacher. But, if the earlier schooling has been inadequate, it will be almost impossible for any subsequent discipline to entirely do away with its evil effects.

Generations ago, the supreme importance of selecting only the fittest persons for the child's first teachers was recognized by earnest educationists. To a certain extent the principles of those great reformers have been applied in the systems of our time. But as yet such attention to the educational needs of the dawning mind is the luxury of the few. This is the case even in those countries where school reform has engaged the thoughts of administrators with most fruitful results. The adoption of improved and rational methods is still only at the experimental stage. The day will doubtless come when both parents and teachers will look back with horror and resentment at a system which permitted men who had failed in all honest work and women who were satisfied with menials' pay to direct the unfolding capacities of the young. No novice is admitted to serve as journeyman in a handicraft, however easy of mastery its details may be. The medical and legal professions are jealously guarded against the intrusion of the unqualified. But to the office of the teacher there are no such safeguards worthy of the name. In theory, it is acknowledged that there is an art of teaching, as there is a science of education. But in practice it is by many regarded as one of those accomplishments that come by nature and need no apprenticeship. The minimum of innate fitness, knowledge and experience that suffices for acceptance to the charge of some district schools is on a level with the minimum remuneration. And that is very small indeed,—how small the inspectors' reports abundantly show. Nor is it in Canada alone that criticisms and complaints are aimed against these anomalies. In the other provinces and in the United States the same unsatisfactory condition of things largely exists, the country schools in many districts being demoralized through poor and constantly changing teachers, selected mainly with a view to cheapness. And until just and rational ideas of the momentous importance of the elementary teacher's work take possession of the public mind, there is not likely to be any fruitful and far-reaching reform of the system.

We live in hope, however. Those who can recall the state of Canada, and of this province especially, before the institution of normal schools need not be told that our present status, much as it falls short of what is desired, compares favorably with the past. If there are woefully backward communities, as yet untouched by the spirit of progress, there are others where the aspiration for better things is on the way to fulfilment and earnest educationists can point to some splendid triumphs over ignorance and prejudice. One deeply seated and mischievous error has still, however, held its ground—the degradation of the elementary teacher is accepted with equanimity. Accomplished women and earnest-minded men have, indeed, in rare instances and under exceptionally favorable circumstances, devoted their learning and thought, their patience and tact, to the problem of the child's mental development. There is no lack of inspiring literature on the subject. There is no excuse for ignorance of the methods that should be employed. In exhibition after exhibition, in congress after congress, the art of teaching, the qualifications of the teacher, the structure and equipment of the model schoolhouse, the use and abuse of books in education and every other branch of the subject have been expounded and illustrated; and still more than nine-tenths of our elementary schools give no evidence of educational progress either in the teacher or the teacher's environment. Till every elementary teacher is a liberally educated man or woman, with a recognized position in society accordant with the usefulness and dignity of the teacher's work, it is idle to speak of teaching as a profession. But when that stage is reached, French will be taught in all our schools.